the weekly Standard

AUGUST 9, 1999 • $3.95

FROM PRE-SCHOOL TO ED-SCHOOL
LYNNE V. CHENEY • DARCY ANN OLSEN

Body Slam

Matt Labash reports on Jesse Ventura, Ross Perot, and the lunacy of the Reform Party

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the weekly Standard

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The Weekly Standard (ISSN 1083-3013) is published weekly (except the second week in April, the second week in July, the last week in August, and the first week in January) by News America Incorporated, 1211 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 96127, Washington, DC 20077-7767. For subscription customer service in the United States, call 1-800-274-7293. For new subscription orders, please call 1-800-283-2014. Subscribers: Please send new subscription orders to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 96153, Washington, DC 20090-6153; changes of address to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 96127, Washington, DC 20077-7767. Please include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. Yearly subscriptions, $78.00. Canadian/foreign orders require additional postage and must be paid in full prior to commencement of service. Canadian/foreign subscribers may call 1-303-776-3605 for subscription inquiries. Visa/MasterCard payment accepted. Cover price, $3.50. Back issues, $3.50 (includes postage and handling). Send manuscripts and letters to the editor to The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. The Weekly Standard Advertising Sales Office in Washington, DC, is 1-202-293-4900. Advertising Production: Call Ian Slatter 1-202-496-3354. Copyright 1999, News America Incorporated. All rights reserved. No material in The Weekly Standard may be reprinted without permission of the copyright owner. The Weekly Standard is a trademark of News America Incorporated.

BPA INTERNATIONAL

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Will Congress Let Wes Clark Fade Away?

One of the signal failures of the Republican Congress has been its neglect of oversight responsibilities and opportunities. God knows, the Clinton administration does enough appalling or at least embarrassing things to keep the congressional committees busy, but most of them seem remarkably uninterested in performing what is actually an important public service, as well as one with considerable potential for political mileage.

A notable exception to this general congressional passivity has been Jesse Helms's Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which steps up to the plate this week with a hearing on the administration's disgraceful recent performance, in giving the back of its hand to democratic Taiwan. House International Relations chairman Ben Gilman promises to battle the administration on this front, too.

But there is no sign of congressional initiative with respect to the other recent administration foreign policy disgrace, the firing of Gen. Wesley Clark as NATO commander. Just the opposite. John Warner, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, immediately hastened to assure one and all that he would cause no problem in the confirmation process for Clark's successor, Gen. Joseph Ralston.

So here you have the commander who just won a war being dumped by the Clinton administration because he wanted to fight it in the right way and gave honest and candid advice to his superiors about how to do this. Here you have what Sen. John McCain correctly identifies as a terrible precedent that "will influence other senior officers to place political considerations before military necessities and deprive future presidents of the counsel they need to best protect our security." Here you have an opportunity for Congress to probe fundamental problems in the Clinton administration's management of national security. And the ranking Republican says, "Never mind." Perhaps it's time for a new chairman.

Freedom of the Press We Like

The American Spectator, the conservative monthly, has now been cleared of the spurious charge that it participated in a scheme to pay off an anti-Clinton witness, David Hale, in the Whitewater case. Which raises a question: Where was the outrage? Normally, the national press, media critics, and various journalistic groups—the Society of Professional Journalists, the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press—rush indignant to the defense of journalists when they are even tangentially scrutinized by prosecutors. But when a special counsel, appointed by Kenneth Starr, targeted the *Spectator* and its now-defunct Arkansas Project, which funded probes of Bill Clinton, there wasn't a peep of protest from the establishment media. Contrast this with the yowls from the press when White House aide Sidney Blumenthal claimed he'd been questioned before a Starr grand jury about his contacts with reporters. Blumenthal, it turned out, was lying, but the *Spectator* really was frisked by investigators. The special counsel questioned the publisher, editor, managing editor, and some writers. He examined the magazine's financial records.

The magazine was cleared, and one could say all's well that ends well. But imagine if some other news organization had to reveal its inner workings to prosecutors because of some flimsy charge. Outrage! None in this case though. Why the double standard? What comes to mind is the simple explanation: Blumenthal is liberal, the *Spectator* conservative (and aggressively anti-Clinton). Could the mainstream media really be so biased and petty as to let ideology and distaste govern its response? You betcha.

Twelve Angry Ex-Staffers

The temperamental ex-Republican congressman and sometime Soup Nazi Michael Forbes (see "A New Democrat" by Tucker Carlson in the Aug. 2 Weekly Standard) appeared on CNN's *Crossfire* last week claiming that his old staff hadn't quit en masse because he suddenly became a Democrat. Instead, "Republican bullies attacked my staff and pressured them to leave. It was unbelievable. . . . It's one thing to come after Mike Forbes, but to come after my staff and bully them and require them to quit . . . was really unconscionable." When fellow guest Rep. Ray LaHood chimed in that Forbes's old staff hadn't needed any prompting to abandon Forbes, he spluttered, "Oh that's baloney" and then went even further: "Many of [my old staff] called my

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Scrapbook

office and called me in tears. I have a single mom with two kids who just bought a house—who happens to be a registered Democrat—and she got calls over the weekend and she was in tears. And she didn't know what to do."

A dozen former staffers issued a statement shortly after Forbes made his remarks, calling his allegations "an unequivocal lie. . . . At no time did anyone in Republican House Leadership ever, repeat ever, threaten or bully the former staff either individually or collectively to leave employment in his office. In fact, quite the opposite is true. Republican House Leadership, specifically Congressman Tom Davis and his staff at the National Republican Congressional Committee, Republican National Chairman Jim Nicholson, Republican Congressman John Sweeney and Brookhaven Republican Town Chairman John Bivona as well as dozens of other Republican officials have been more than generous with their support of us."

As for the sobbing mother who called Forbes for advice? According to the Forbes dozen, she neither cried, nor called, nor is a registered Democrat.

Social Clymer

The Scrapbook doesn't pretend to understand newsroom politics at the *New York Times* but dimly recalls a tradition at the paper of record of pretending that its reporters, as a matter of policy, should stay above the fray—should not appear as partisan hacks on television, not cheerlead for their favorite Democratic politicians, and above all not make such a partisan spectacle of themselves as to confirm Reed Irvine's deepest suspicions of liberal bias. Apparently that stuffy old-school thinking has gone by the boards.

Last week's edition of *Time* featured a profile of Ted Kennedy written by Adam Clymer, the *Times*'s veteran Capitol Hill reporter. The profile, an excerpt from Clymer's forthcoming biography of Kennedy, is breathtaking in its adulation of the Massachusetts senator. Clymer begins with a startling bit of moral equivalence, noting that Kennedy's senatorial achievements are responsible for "changing the lives of far more Americans than remember the name Mary Jo Kopechne." The issue, one would think, is not who remembers her name, but what Kennedy did. Nonetheless, Clymer laments that Kennedy's "failures outside the Senate have drawn more public attention than his successes inside it."

It gets better. Clymer asserts, with no evidence, that "the nation's health is still vastly better" thanks to Kennedy, and that he "made elections cleaner with the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1974." Clymer also praises Kennedy for having blocked Robert Bork's Supreme Court confirmation; Kennedy's vile demagoguery on that occasion goes unremarked. Clymer closes by proclaiming Kennedy not just "the leading Senator of his time" but also "one of the greats in the history of this singular institution."

Kennedy should just hire Clymer and make an honest staff assistant out of him.

Help Wanted

The Weekly Standard has an entry-level opening for a staff assistant/receptionist. Duties include answering phones, greeting visitors, sorting mail, and handling back-issue requests. Please mail your résumé to: Business Manager, The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington, D.C. 20036. Or fax to 202-293-4901.

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Casual

THE MOVIEGOER

Maybe you watch movies on airplanes the way I do. I glance periodically at the screen, never bothering to attach the earphones. I'm ready, though, if something interesting happens, to hook up and pay attention. Not once had this occurred—until last week, while I was flying back to Washington, D.C., from Portland, Oregon. I'd read the plot of *The Deep End of the Ocean* in the airline magazine: A 3-year-old boy is kidnapped, then appears years later, adopted by another family and living down the street. The real mother, Michelle Pfeiffer in the film, sees the boy when he comes by her house offering to mow the lawn. The encounter takes her breath away, and it prompted me to grab the earphones.

This is the only movie I've seen this year, and that's why I mention it. I used to be an avid filmgoer. I'd go two or three times a week, sometimes alone, more often with my wife, Barbara. I'd watch old movies, new movies, and especially Italian movies. I loved going to movies in the afternoon when the theater was nearly empty. Best of all was watching a double feature of subtitled European movies at the Circle Theater on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, a long-gone repertory house. That's where I saw *The 400 Blows* and *Breathless* on the same afternoon.

But no more. Things have changed. I've changed, and so has the movie industry. The worst development, to me anyway, was the closing of the movie houses that showed old films. In the '60s and '70s, Washington had three of these, plus the American Film Institute, and there was a lot to see. You could get up to speed, in a few years of conscientious moviegoing, on a half-century of Japanese, French, German, Indian, Polish, English, Swedish, American, and of course Italian films. It's no secret what killed these theaters: the VCR. Now you can watch old movies on video at home, assuming you stumble onto someplace that lends or rents them. *Rocco and His Brothers* is a bit harder to find than *Lethal Weapon 4*. But I don't want to look at a movie at home. Watching *I Vitelloni* in the living room, pausing when the phone rings, isn't the same as seeing it at a dingy old theater, uninterrupted. You can't become totally absorbed in the story at home. At least I can't.

Foreign movies, new ones, are pretty much a rarity these days, too. Years ago, they were routinely shown in Washington (where I grew up). It took me a while to get used to subtitles, but I managed. If I hadn't, I would never have seen *The Easy Life* or *Girl with a Suitcase*, two great but now forgotten Italian movies of the '60s. I saw *Mondo Cane* the night before I went into the Army. One theater specialized in British films. I guess there's no longer a market for these movies, otherwise somebody would be making money showing them. The last foreign movie I saw was a French documentary on the life of bugs and plants. I read a rave review of it and insisted my wife and kids come with me. The theater, now closed, was up a flight of stairs and very cramped. The movie was monotonous. As I recall, we outnumbered the other folks in the theater. My kids still tease me about it.

I've really got nothing against American movies, especially the comedies. My wife and I took our son to see *Dumb & Dumber* and we laughed more than he did. I also liked *Uncle Buck*, particularly the scene where John Candy gets the ax out of his trunk and threatens the creep who's dating his niece. My kids insist *Houseguest* is hilarious. I haven't seen it.

My problem with American movies is political. A few years back, I decided I'd boycott left-wing movies, which means I've skipped almost all thrillers in the last two decades. How do I know they're left-wing? I read reviews. In most thrillers it's some conspiratorial right-wing group or religious sect or business mogul who's to blame for whatever bad occurs. Who needs that? Aside from an occasional comedy—and most comedies are politically neutral—I try to limit myself to politically correct movies. To be precise, politically correct from a conservative viewpoint. This has really cut down on my trips to the theater. But I'll go if part four of the *Rambo* series comes out or *Red Dawn 2*.

Yes, there's also an old-guy reason for not going to the movies. It's not that too many are R-rated or worse. It's the time the movies start. They begin either at 7:30 P.M. or nearly 10 P.M. The first is too early. I'd have to miss dinner. The later time is just too late. I can't stay awake. I'd stay up for *La Dolce Vita*. But for *The Matrix*, no.

On the airplane from Portland, it was midday and I was a captive audience. And *The Deep End of the Ocean* turned out to be a genre film, a parents' movie. Not many movies qualify for this genre: The parents are supposed to be wiser than the kids. Michelle Pfeiffer is, and she gets her boy back.

FRED BARNES

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THE FUTURE ISN'T WHAT IT USED TO BE.

RETIREMENT HAS CHANGED. Used to be that families could get by with one income, that employees stayed with the same company for thirty-five years, and that long-term care needs were taken care of by the extended family.

Today, the future's a different place. Americans are unsure of Social Security, long-term care costs can be financially devastating, and private pensions are suffocating in red tape.

But there is hope on the horizon. Congress has a unique opportunity to help the next generation of retirees by reforming Social Security, and by providing stronger tax incentives to encourage long-term care protection and expand private pension opportunities.

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Standing Up for Taiwan

William Kristol and Robert Kagan rightly propose that we help Taiwan escape from the "one China" box into which it was put ("Free Taiwan," July 26). Henry Kissinger and his associates sold Taiwan down the river 27 years ago, effectively promising Beijing a free hand with the island. Despite being so cavalierly written off as a useless appendage of history, Taiwan surprised everyone by not only surviving, but thriving. The people of Taiwan built a free-market economy that is the envy of their cousins on the mainland. They also democratized, striking fear into the hearts of the tiny elite that rules, by deadly force, their giant neighbor. These facts give Taiwan and its people new claims on U.S. sympathies that go well beyond any residual affection some conservatives may feel for the losing side in the Chinese civil war.

By asking for "state-to-state" talks with China, President Lee Teng-hui is trying to break out of the box. In response, the bullies of Beijing are now calling Lee a "traitor," and are insisting on "party-to-party" talks, as in the old days of the Chinese civil war. In fact, Lee can't agree to party-to-party talks. He is the elected president of all Taiwan, not just the chairman of the Kuomintang. What would Americans think if Bill Clinton, acting as the head of the Democratic party, entered into negotiations over America's future? China may be caught in a one-party time warp, but Taiwan has changed, and is now a full-fledged democracy.

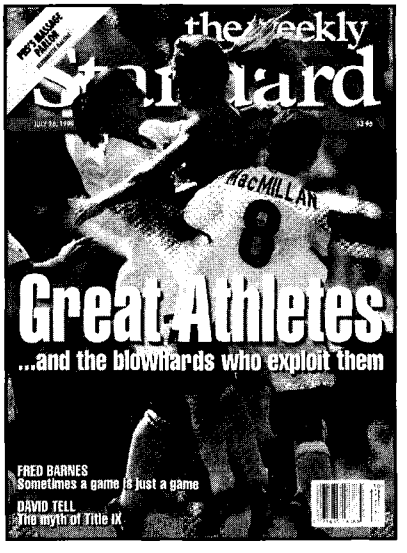
In the past this difference has been finessed: When talks were first held in 1993, the two sides were represented by non-governmental organizations that, on Taiwan's side at least, everyone present recognized as representing Taiwan's government.

Admitting that Taiwan is a state would be the beginning of wisdom in formulating U.S. China policy, and is the only way to bring about a true reconciliation between China and Taiwan. The United States should insist that the Beijing regime negotiate with the government of Taiwan as an equal. As a full-fledged democracy, the government led by President Lee enjoys a legitimacy far exceeding that of the Chinese Communist regime led by Party Secretary Jiang Zemin.

STEVE MOSHER
FALLS CHURCH, VA

Thank you for William Kristol and Robert Kagan's excellent editorial on Taiwan. It was the first I've seen that got this issue right, and it said everything that needed to be said.

Hollywood liberals and their ilk wax melancholy over the loss of Tibet 50 years ago. But where are they now, when something can be done to prevent the next such authoritarian takeover—one that will likely be far more devastating on every level than the takeover of Tibet was? Along with



the destabilization of the Soviet nuclear/biological/chemical war machine, the future of Taiwan is the most important issue in the world right now, with potentialities that far outweigh anything that could ever happen in the Balkans. Now is one of the worst times in history for there to be a leadership vacuum.

Realpolitik aside, the United States should be ashamed of itself for not supporting a democratic, non-threatening nation against a repressive totalitarian regime which has already begun eroding the façade of self-determination in Hong Kong. Our support of the "one China" policy was fine as long as Taiwan was also willing to come along for the ride; but now that they have seen fit to disembark, we should too.

The fantastic development of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, etc. since World War II has only been possible because of the stability engendered by a Pax Americana in the Pacific. If this is not maintained, investment will be sucked back out so fast that we'll have to come up with a new term for the "Asian Crisis" of 1997. The social turmoil will be staggering.

DAVID CURTIN
LOGAN, UT

William Kristol and Robert Kagan's editorial about Taiwan is, as usual, an incredibly clear-headed, straight-talking, makes-so-much-sense-it-will-never-happen piece of writing. It appears that this country is now led by an administration that is unmoved by tiny democratic U.S. allies—namely Israel and Taiwan—who are either surrounded or leaned on by barbaric, avowed enemies of everything American.

ANDREW STERN
NEW YORK, NY

Backrubs for Big Bird

Bernadette Malone's misleading piece ignores the facts ("PBS's Massage Parlor," July 26). She had them, but didn't report them. Seated-chair massage is a small part of PBS's Wellness Program, a cost-effective, widely accepted, and important preventive health initiative that also includes flu shots and blood-pressure testing. It represents a minuscule portion—about two-tenths of one percent—of PBS's health care expenses. No federal dollars go toward this subsidized employee benefit. All of PBS's federal funds are earmarked for programming and education services.

Studies show that preventive measures work. Employees who spend most of their work hours seated at a computer are prone to Carpal Tunnel Syndrome and back-related conditions. Offering seated-massage benefits helps keep employees on the job and productive.

CAROLE DICKERT-SCHERR
VICE PRESIDENT, HUMAN RESOURCES
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Correspondence

Al Gore's Drug Problem

The most surprising thing about David Tell's editorial defending Vice President Gore's South African AIDS drug policy is the extent to which he was willing to swallow the spin of Gore's staff despite all contradictory evidence ("In Defense of Al Gore—Just This Once," July 19). What happened to THE WEEKLY STANDARD's famous suspecting glance? Was it sacrificed just because you agree with Gore's policy on this matter? Here are just some of the facts Tell ignored:

(1) Gore is the co-chair of the U.S.-South Africa Binational Commission and has coordinated trade policy between the two countries since 1994. More specifically, according to a report to Congress by the State Department, the vice president spearheaded "an assiduous, concerted campaign" to stop South Africa from making low-cost AIDS drugs available to its 3.2 million infected citizens. If Gore is willing "to speed the availability of lower-cost pharmaceuticals in South Africa," why has he condoned both putting South Africa on the U.S. government's Watch List, and the drug companies' two-year campaign against South Africa's Medicines Act?

(2) Tell writes that Gore's staff "will patiently explain all the trade-law technicalities to anyone who bothers to call." I did bother to call, and did have the technicalities patiently explained to me. But when I checked, the explanations turned out to be wrong. South Africa's Medicines Act does not violate World Trade Organization regulations by allowing for the compulsory licensing and parallel importing of AIDS drugs. Indeed, the United States regularly engages in compulsory licensing.

(3) The vice president's hand-wringing letter to the Congressional Black Caucus was written only after public protests, news stories, and opinion pieces focused attention on his role in keeping generic AIDS drugs off the market. And it indicated a change only in rhetoric, not in policy. Unfortunately, this spruced up spin was good enough to dupe THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

ARIANNA HUFFINGTON
LOS ANGELES, CA

David Tell's spirited defense of Vice President Al Gore on the issue of Africa and AIDS was moving, but often off the mark. Our involvement in the South Africa trade dispute dates to July 1997, when Gore used a meeting of the U.S.-South Africa Binational Commission (BNC) to pressure the South African minister of health to negotiate with pharmaceutical companies over proposed amendments to the South African Medicines Act.

Parallel imports are not, as the editorial suggests, some Third World way to avoid patent laws. They are simply finding the best world price for a manufacturer's products. For example, buying Claritin in Canada for $61 rather than in North Dakota for $218—the same product from the same company, but sold for a different price. Faced with an inefficient and uncompetitive distribution system, South African officials wanted to buy in the most competitive local markets, including the United States.

Parallel imports do not violate patent laws in Japan, the United States, or Europe, and they are plainly permitted under the WTO's TRIPS agreement on intellectual property. For two years, at the request of the pharmaceutical industry, Al Gore and U.S. trade officials have been bullying the South Africans so drug companies can charge premium prices, aimed at the relatively wealthy white minority.

Compulsory licensing does involve making copies of a drug, in return for a government-set royalty to the patent owner. This, too, is permitted under international trade agreements—the same trade agreements that permit the U.S. government to use compulsory licensing under the Clean Air Act, for nuclear power, for public health purposes, for government use, and as a remedy for anti-competitive practices under U.S. antitrust laws.

Finally, there is Tell's concern about Africans' taking drugs improperly and hosting disease-resistant strains of infectious diseases. And the remedy to this problem is what? Stop countries from having access to cheap drugs?

If the U.S. government is so concerned about the medical infrastructure issue, why have U.S. trade pressures focused on Thailand and South Africa, two countries with relatively advanced medical infrastructures?

JAMES LOVE
CONSUMER PROJECT ON TECHNOLOGY
WASHINGTON, DC

DAVID TELL RESPONDS: ***There is a public policy dispute. Each side puts its "spin" on the underlying facts. We then apply our "famous suspecting glance" to the facts themselves. If it turns out someone is actually telling the truth, we say so, even when the someone in question is Al Gore. I would recommend this technique to Arianna Huffington.***

Gore has not "coordinated trade policy" with South Africa since 1994. The binational commission he co-chairs attempts only to resolve bilateral impasses at the ministerial level. In this particular impasse, notwithstanding State Department language intended to placate the pharmaceutical industry, Gore has gone his own way—declining to endorse that industry's preferred solution, trade sanctions, while continuing to pursue a serious question of trade law.

Which question is not as Huffington describes it. Yes, the WTO's TRIPS agreement permits parallel importing and compulsory licensing. Provided, that is, that the authorizing country proceeds according to clearly articulated rules involving, among other things, national "emergency" declarations, negotiations with original patent holders, royalty payments, and re-export restrictions. South Africa's Medicines Act amendments appear to abrogate these rules by authorizing parallel importing and compulsory licensing "notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained within the Patents Act" that binds that country to TRIPS. So the United States, with some justice, is concerned about the international patent rights of its domestic manufacturers.

James Love does not address the "notwithstanding" clause at basic issue. To my mind, at least, he also skips rather too quickly over a still more important problem. If the introduction of modern anti-retroviral agents to Africa, where there is no guarantee that they will be administered according to accepted protocol, threatens to produce continent-wide drug-resistant strains of AIDS, then it may not be a good idea.

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Not everyone shares Love's confidence in South Africa's "relatively advanced" medical system. The South African health ministry's most famous past AIDS initiative is its mid-1990s propaganda on behalf of Virodene P058, a purported miracle cure based on a poisonous industrial solvent.

THE ELECTRIC SLIDE

Irwin Stelzer's article paints a negative, cynical view of the Comprehensive Electricity Competition Act ("Al Gore's Marginal Utility," July 19). He accuses the Clinton administration of being "reluctant to walk the walk" in favor of free markets and competition for electricity. I disagree.

Republicans and Democrats, in both the Congress and the administration, do agree that it's time for us to remove impediments in federal law that hinder competition. I serve as the national chairman of Americans for Affordable Electricity (AAE), a coalition of more than 260 members that favors enacting new legislation guaranteeing all Americans the right to choose their electricity supplier. In contrast to Stelzer, I want to credit the administration for putting forward a comprehensive proposal to restructure this vital industry. And now, under the leadership of House Commerce Committee chairman Tom Bliley and Energy and Power Subcommittee chairman Joe Barton, we're heading toward markup of one of the most important pieces of consumer legislation in years.

Sure, we can quibble about the details of what should be included in the legislation. That's the nature of the legislative process. AAE does not support all of the provisions in the administration's bill. But we are enthusiastic in our support of enacting legislation during this Congress. And doing that takes a bipartisan effort. We should encourage Republicans and Democrats alike to "walk the walk and talk the talk" of comprehensive legislation to bring the benefits of a competitive electric market to all consumers.

The stakes are large. So are the benefits for Americans. Twenty-four states have approved customer choice initiatives that will enable consumers to shop for their electricity providers. But state action alone is not enough. Only Congress can address the interstate aspects of the industry that need reform.

I encourage all competition advocates to step up their efforts in support of enacting legislation at the federal level that would repeal outdated statutes like the Public Utility Holding Company Act, address gaps in federal authority to ensure that we have a reliable industry, and guarantee open access to interstate transmission lines. It's worth the effort.

BILL PAXON
AMERICANS FOR
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WASHINGTON, DC

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LOVE POTION TITLE IX

I agree with many of David Tell's assertions, particularly how men's sports have been decimated by universities attempting to comply with ill-defined gender equity rules ("The Myth of Title IX," July 26). His logic is flawed, however, when he says Title IX had nothing to do with the success of the U.S. Women's World Cup soccer program.

Tell writes that the players received their "most extensive and important coaching" in youth leagues, and he tries to back that up by stating that 7 of the team's 11 starters joined the team as teenagers in the 1980s. But only one of these "teenage phenoms" (Kristine Lilly) scored a goal for the team before playing in college.

Tell oddly fails to point out that each of those seven players—in fact, every member of the 1999 team—starred in the '80s and '90s for NCAA college programs that would not have existed had Title IX not provided the impetus for universities to create women's athletic teams. While the players certainly got their initial soccer training in the youth programs, it is folly to suggest that this was more important than the coaching and experience they received in college.

While Tell is correct that aggressive enforcement of Title IX did not begin until 1992, his implication that it had no impact on college athletics beforehand is foolish. Before Title IX, the NCAA and universities had no motivation to offer women's sports programs. For example, the NCAA first began offering men's team championships in 1921, when Illinois won the first track and field title.

For the next 50 years, the NCAA didn't sponsor a single women's sporting event. Then came Title IX in 1972. Within 10 years of its passage, the NCAA began offering women's championships in 12 sports, including women's soccer, which began in 1982. Even the most bitter Title IX opponents cannot consider this to be mere coincidence. Tell is correct that the current enforcement of Title IX is seriously flawed. But despite its imperfections, Title IX's impact on women's sports should not be understated.

DAVID NIELSEN
ARLINGTON, VA

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the weekly Standard

Spend It on Defense

The federal treasury (barring a recession) will run an astonishing $3 trillion cumulative surplus over the next ten years. The prospect of so much ready money has brought Washington's legislative and policy engines, largely cold and silent since the end of 1995, roaring back to life.

Hill Republicans would like to return nearly $800 billion of the pending surplus to taxpayers. That would be nice. The Clinton White House eyes instead a pricey expansion of the Medicare program—though it also claims that a good bit of future revenue should simply be banked, given the post-2010 actuarial crisis facing both the Medicare and Social Security entitlements (a crisis the administration has heretofore scrupulously ignored). Underneath the din produced by this debate, executive branch officials and congressional appropriators in both parties mutter that the spending caps imposed by the 1997 budget agreement are much too tight to meet a whole variety of domestic needs.

THE PENTAGON IS *STARVED* FOR CASH SUFFICIENT TO SUSTAIN WHAT ARE UNIVERSALLY UNDERSTOOD TO BE ITS NEAR-TERM MISSIONS.

And then there is the defense budget, weirdly near-invisible in all this fiscal to-ing and fro-ing. Military spending to protect and advance national interests would seem properly the highest priority of our federal government. One would think this rule applied with special force today as the United States, the "sole remaining superpower," is uniquely blessed and cursed with unprecedented global opportunities, responsibilities, and challenges. Most Americans welcome our now-dominant muscle, of course, and most too-casually assume that it will be preserved indefinitely. As it could and should be.

Yet the Pentagon *starves*—we say so advisedly—even for cash sufficient to sustain what are universally understood to be its immediate, near-term missions, let alone for investments necessary to get us where we should want to be a generation from now.

How can this be? To begin with, post-Cold War budget cutbacks have caused serious degradation of the military's short-term combat readiness. In the days of primarily fixed-place deployments in Europe and South Korea, for example, it was a rule of thumb that for every forward-stationed soldier there must be at least two in the rear. Since 1992, the number of unexpected deployments has vastly expanded—think Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Iraq, Kosovo—so the old ratio is obsolete. To maintain general readiness, we need more men in uniform, maybe as many as we had when there was a Soviet Union.

But we no longer have them, not by a long shot. This year, there are just under 1.4 million active-duty personnel in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force—740,000 fewer than in 1989 and the fewest since 1940. An Army that used five and a half heavy divisions in the Persian Gulf War today has a worldwide total of only six. It is chronically and critically short of helicopter pilots, in particular, and junior-grade and noncommissioned officers generally. The Navy lacks 1,000 mission-specified pilots and has 18,000 unfilled billets in its shrinking fleet of ships. Aircraft carriers now go to sea understaffed by as many as 1,000 sailors. Similar shortages obtain in the other services.

And no service comes close to adequately equipping its troops. The Air Force's stockpile of air-launched cruise missiles is almost entirely depleted. During the Kosovo bombing, its A-10 pilots were forced to spend their own money to buy retail global-positioning receivers for use with outdated survival radios. Last August, the Marine Aircraft Group at Cherry Point, North Carolina, was ordered to fly its 42 Harrier jets out of the path of approaching Hurricane Bonnie. It got only 21 of them off the ground; the others were incapacitated by missing parts. And so on.

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Building-wide, the Pentagon each year needs close to $30 billion more than it has just for basic ammunition, parts, and supplies.

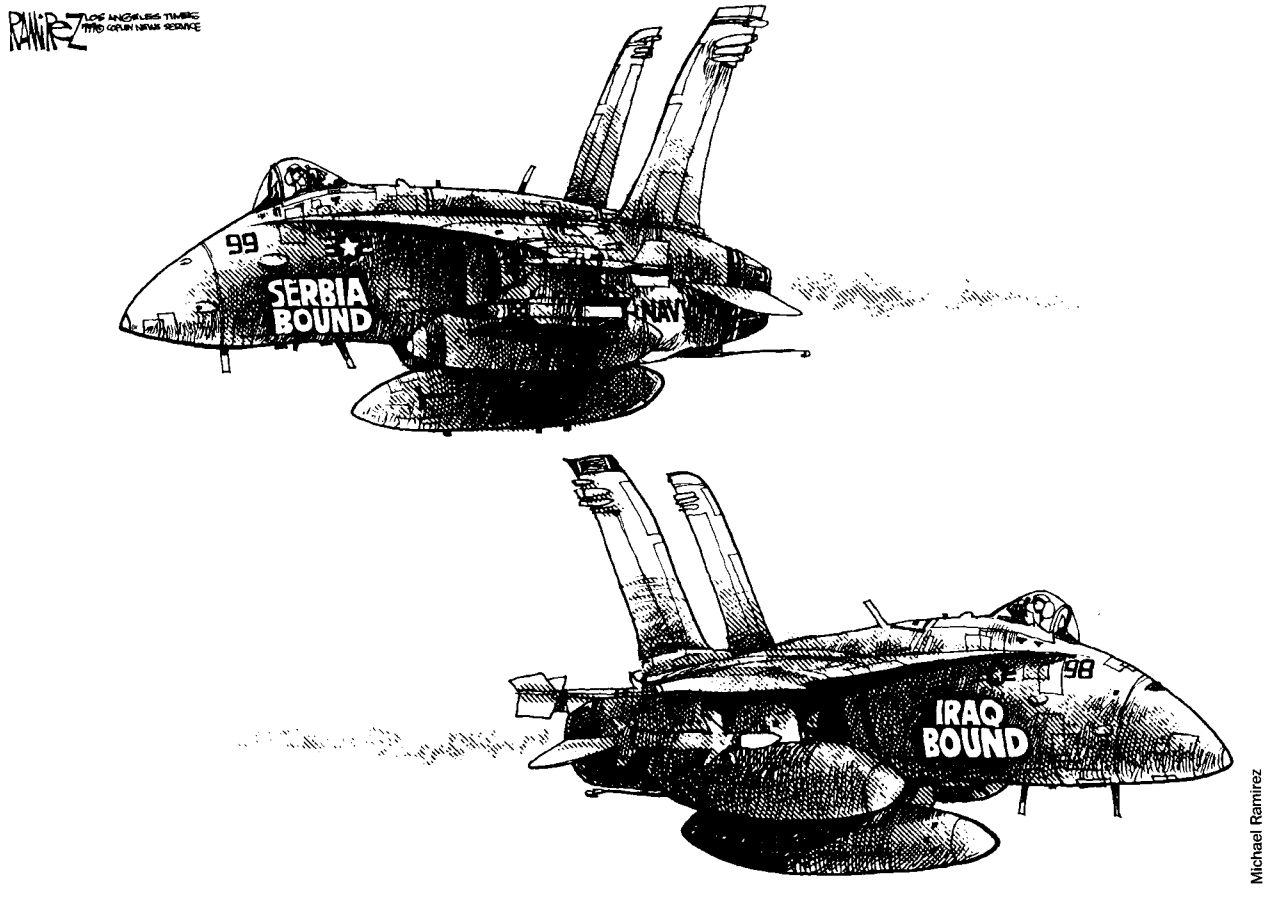
Six months ago, the Clinton administration released a multi-year Defense Department budget plan. It was advertised as restorative, especially where long-deferred procurement of next-generation weapons systems is concerned. But the promised restoration is chimerical. If enacted, this plan would produce, in fiscal year 2004, government-wide national defense spending of $283.9 billion in inflation-adjusted outlays. That is $900 million more than the 1999 baseline, or an increase of just *three-tenths of one percent over five full years*. A Pentagon overburdened as never before is now accorded a lower share of the federal budget, representing a lower share of national economic output, than at any time since Adolf Hitler invaded Poland. And the Clinton administration seems unwilling to do anything about it.

The Congress appears similarly disinclined. A few weeks back, the House of Representatives passed a Pentagon budget for 2000 that barely exceeds the president's request. The earlier, Senate-passed Pentagon appropriation is for *less* than the president's request. For the eighth year in a row—and the fourteenth year of the past fifteen—defense spending is likely to decline.

All of this is to say nothing of the major expenditures that will be required to ensure that we take full advantage of the anticipated "revolution in military affairs." To ensure that we maintain our technological advantage over potential adversaries a decade or two out. To ensure that we field missile defense systems for threats against our forward-deployed troops and materiel—and against American and allied civilians. Current spending levels cripple our ability to meet all these fundamental obligations.

Yes, we are the most powerful nation on Earth. Yes, we spend more than any other on our military. And, yes, it has so far proved enough to carry us from success to success overseas. But, away from view of the infrared CNN cameras, our Pentagon is badly limping. And an America that pretends to assume its responsibilities as the superpower of principle cannot afford to limp at all. Deficits can no longer excuse the neglect. If there are to be federal surpluses, they should be spent—first and foremost—on defense.

—David Tell, for the Editors



Michael Ramirez

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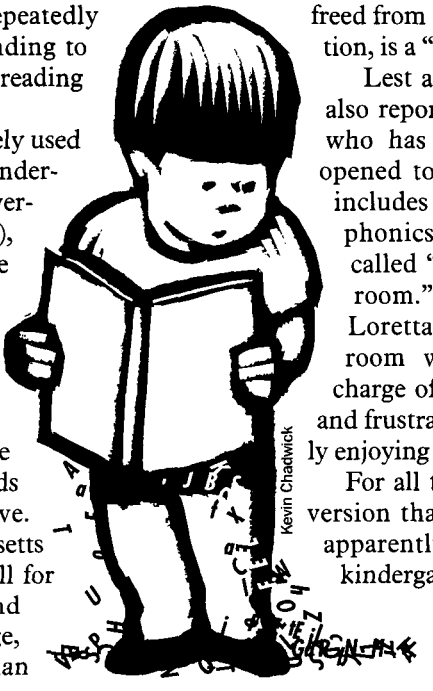
WHO TEACHES THE TEACHERS?

by Lynne V. Cheney

WITH ITS PICTURES of earnest schoolchildren busily learning, Regie Routman's book doesn't look dangerous. But like many textbooks used in colleges of education, *Invitations: Changing as Teachers and Learners K-12* (Heinemann, 1994) may be keeping thousands of children from mastering basic academic skills. Future teachers learn from Routman, for example, that entirely too much attention has been paid to phonics, with the result that "some children have difficulty learning to read." In fact, research has repeatedly shown almost the opposite: Attending to phonics is important to *preventing* reading difficulties.


Kevin Chadwick

Invitations, one of the most widely used textbooks in ed schools (it's at Vanderbilt, Michigan State, and the University of Arizona, to name a few), illustrates why efforts to improve American education are so often frustrated. Even when evidence about effective teaching abounds, education colleges tend to ignore it, and future teachers don't learn about it. This is true even in states committed to methods shown by research to be effective. Since 1997, for example, Massachusetts has had reading standards that call for the formal teaching of letter-sound relationships. Yet at Lesley College, which prepares more teachers than any other institution in the commonwealth, education students are still learning from *Invitations* that phonics instruction is useless or even a "handicap." Since 1996, California has had a law requiring that future teachers be instructed in "systematic, explicit phonics." Yet education professors at many California institutions (including California State and San Diego State) are still assigning Routman.

Short on evidence, Routman's book is long on anecdotes—which ed schools have lately been claiming constitute a special qualitative "research," far more useful to teachers than the old-fashioned quantitative kind. Routman presents the case of Maria, a teacher so frustrated that "she often ended the day in tears." The problem is that Maria, who herself had a traditional education, feels obliged to pass on to her students information about such matters as grammar and punctuation. "But," Routman reports, "no matter how hard she tried, things didn't seem to come together for her." Fortunately, Maria attends a summer workshop that shows her the error of her ways and the wisdom of "whole language," an approach based on the idea that children will naturally evolve into readers (and spellers and punctuators) if only adults will get out of the way. With this enlightenment, Maria becomes a teacher who "can offer children choices in decision making about their own learning." Her classroom, freed from focusing on dull matters like capitalization, is a "joyful, collaborative community."

Lest any reader miss the message, Routman also reports on Loretta, a second-grade teacher who has a similar conversion. Her eyes are opened to what she really wants to do (which includes "abandoning spelling workbooks and phonics pages") by a week-long conference called "Creating the Whole Language Classroom." As a result of her enlightenment, Loretta now presides over "a child-centered room where children are productively in charge of their own learning." Once struggling and frustrated, she is now "a relaxed teacher clearly enjoying herself."

For all the psychic rewards it brings, the conversion that Routman is urging on teachers can apparently be wrenching. Routman quotes a kindergarten teacher who decided to let her students discover phonics for themselves. "I felt real guilty for a long time," she says. A first-grade teacher reports feeling pressured by second-grade teachers who expect kids to arrive in their classrooms knowing phonics: "Also, I feel guilty for not giving spelling tests." Routman, an elementary school teacher in Ohio, notes that she herself has had difficulties abandoning the explicit teaching of phonics. "It has taken me well over ten years to feel completely comfortable with this approach."

A sensible reaction to all this guilt would be to explore whether there's some justification for it. Are whole-language teachers perhaps aware, at least at a subliminal level, of the extensive research showing that a knowledge of spelling-sound correspondences and common spelling conventions is important to becoming a proficient reader? Indeed, this finding has been so well publicized, most recently in a report from the National Research Council entitled *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, that it would be

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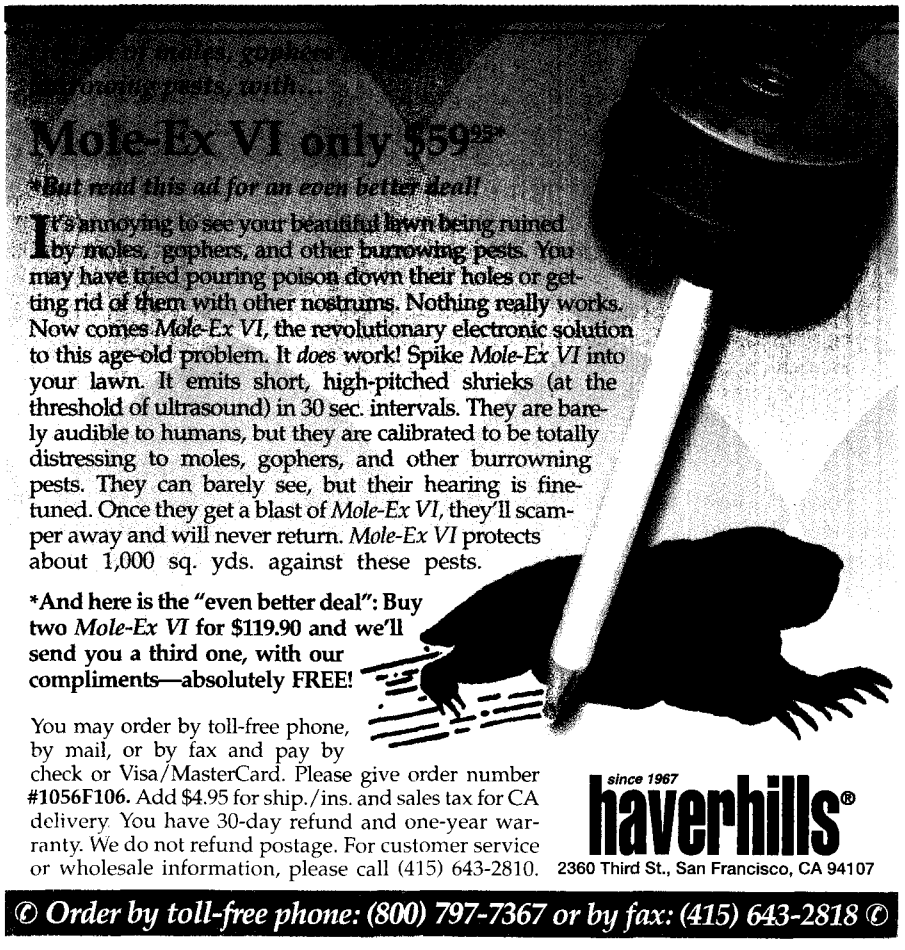
hard for them to miss. The American Federation of Teachers has highlighted the research supporting explicit, systematic phonics instruction. The National Education Association recently helped sponsor a project that looked for programs of proven effectiveness and found two for elementary schools—Direct Instruction and Success for All—both strongly based in phonics.

But rather than exploring the sources of whole-language teachers' anxiety, Routman recommends support groups to diminish it. In these groups, like-minded souls offer encouragement to one another and discuss such matters as how to handle parental discontent. One of the support groups she attends, Routman reports, also lobbies against standardized tests in early grades, a campaign that if successful will allow teachers to decide for themselves whether their methods are working. Such a process would be more "meaningful," Routman claims, though it would, of course, leave parents without a clue about how their children are doing in comparison with others.

Routman maintains that her purpose in writing is to help other teachers develop their personal philosophies of teaching. But her book, although it is 758 pages long, doesn't contain information that teachers need to develop a truly informed view. Routman repeatedly mentions whole-language gurus like Kenneth Goodman (who says that phonics-based reading instruction represents a "flat-earth view of the world") and Frank Smith (who says that the ability to read and write is overvalued: "Literacy doesn't make anyone a better person"), but she entirely neglects both Jeanne Chall and Marilyn Adams, authors of landmark studies synthesizing decades of research and making it perfectly clear that reading programs should include systematic and explicit phonics instruction.

Routman is hardly alone in advocating independence for teachers while effectively restricting their choices. *Creating Classrooms for Authors and Inquirers* by Kathy G. Short and Jerome C. Harste with Carolyn Burke (Heinemann, 1996) begins by approvingly describing teachers who "develop their own personal theories of reading and writing" but by page nine has made clear that the only valid theories anyone could possibly develop are whole-language ones.

Similarly, although Short and Harste repeatedly state that children's agendas should drive the classroom, they are also adamant that students sometimes profess goals—such as wanting to spell correctly—of which teachers must be wary. When one of their students, third-grader Maria, writes that she wants to "learn how to spell," she is carefully observed until the authors are sure she does not suffer from "an overconcern with spelling." Even then she gets not a spelling book, but "lessons on strategies," such as "discussing possible spellings with peers." Short and Harste refer future teachers who want more information to J. Richard Gentry's *Spel . . . Is a Four-Letter Word* (Heinemann, 1987), a book that views "good spelling" as "merely a convenience." Writes Gentry, "There are some people like secretaries, who need to be accurate, but usually even they can use a word processor with a good spelling check." Confessing to being a bad speller



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himself, Gentry helpfully advises students to "make an honest attempt to spell werds wright."

The Short and Harste book dominates elementary education instruction at Indiana University's School of Education, the third largest ed school in the country and the place where Harste teaches. The fact that Harste is president-elect of the National Council of Teachers of English lends added significance to *Creating Classrooms*. The ideas in it are those that the council, an organization some 90,000 strong, promotes through its publications, conferences, and conventions. Future teachers who learn from *Creating Classrooms* that it is a mistake for the curriculum to be "mandated by 'experts' outside the classroom" are getting something close to the official doctrine of their profession—as well as a rationale for ignoring standards set by states to establish what students should know and be able to do at various stages in their education.

The very idea that there are certain facts that kids should know is, according to *Creating Classrooms*, symptomatic of an antiquated way of thinking. In the updated, postmodern world, people (or at least professors) know that there are no such things as facts. There are only "perspectives," and the proper job of a teacher is to help students develop them. One way to do this, Short and Harste advise, is to ask students "to find a 'fact' that is not true from the perspective of another knowledge system." This is, of course, postmodern nonsense. A fact is not a fact if it is not true. It is an error, no matter one's perspective.

Short and Harste sow further confusion when they write about research. They inform their readers:

> Recently, there has been a new shift. Instead of seeing research as objective and language as value free, researchers are now realizing how subjective the whole process is. . . . The only thing research can do is help a learner or a community of learners interrogate their values.

The fact that total objectivity is impossible does not mean that we are condemned to explaining everything subjectively. Striving for objectivity, as scientists around the world can testify, yields important results. While research in social sciences is often less exact than research in the hard sciences, it still produces important information, particularly when data converge, as they do in the case of reading.

But how are future teachers to know any of this? They leave Short and Harste and head for elementary classrooms uninformed about the findings of several decades of scientific research on reading instruction and, in any case, encouraged to regard such research as meaningless.

Lest future teachers ever be tempted to think reliable, replicable research has significance, Western Michigan University professor Constance Weaver in *Reading Process and Practice* (Heinemann, 1994) paints a picture of the distasteful types they would be aligning themselves with: members of the Far Right, driven not by the wish to teach children to read, but by "the desire to promote a religious agenda and/or to maintain the socioeconomic status quo." According to Weaver, who directed the Commission on Reading for the National Council of Teachers of English in the late 1980s, right-wing extremists believe that kids who study phonics will get "the words 'right'" and thus read what the Bible actually says rather than approximate its meaning. Moreover, she writes, "Teaching intensive phonics . . . is also a way of keeping children's attention on doing what they're told and keeping them from reading or thinking for themselves."

Nor, in Weaver's view, is it just their own children that phonics-obsessed right-wingers want to oppress. "The political Far Right's agenda is well-served," she writes, "by promoting docility and obedience—on the part of the lower classes." Ultraconservatives advocate phonics teaching because it is authoritarian, she says, and serves to socialize "nonmainstream students, especially those in so-called lower ability groups or tracks . . . into subordinate roles."

Weaver neglects to mention that the phonics cause has advocates who are not Republicans, much less conservatives. One of the standard-bearers in California, for example, is Marian Joseph, a longtime Democrat, who took up the battle against whole language when one of her grandchildren was expected to figure out reading for himself. In the California legislature, Democrats as well as Republicans have enthusiastically backed pro-phonics bills.

But facts haven't stood in the way of ed school professors claiming a political plot of the very worst kind is afoot. A recent president of the National Council of Teachers of English, infuriated with policymakers who insist that government ought to fund only "reliable, scientific" educational research, linked his opponents not only to the red-baiters of the fifties but to advocates of "slavery, racism, genocide, the incarceration of dissidents in mental hospitals, and a host of other injustices."

California State University, which prepares more than half that state's teachers, is one of the institutions at which Weaver's *Reading Process and Practice* is used. Last year, the academic senate there condemned the state's requirement that ed schools teach phonics as a threat to academic freedom. Apparently convinced that he and his colleagues have a right to fill future teachers with anti-scientific claptrap, one Cal State professor told the *Los Angeles Times*, "What we have in the state right now is McCarthyism."

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But, as the textbooks used in many ed schools clearly show, what we really have all across the country is a situation inimical to making classrooms function more effectively. Colleges of education, long criticized for teaching trivia, are now doing something much worse: sabotaging the best efforts of reformers to get schools to use methods that work.

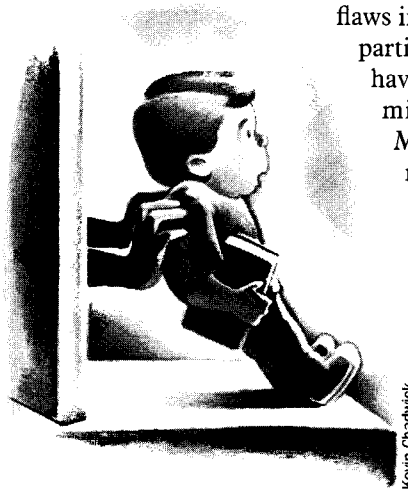
Lynne V. Cheney is a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

Preschool in the Nanny State

by Darcy Ann Olsen

Make no mistake: The push for universal preschool is on. Already the state of Georgia offers free preschool to every 4-year-old, and New York is phasing in a statewide system. Legislators in California, Massachusetts, and New Jersey are itching to follow suit. If Al Gore is elected president in 2000, this state-by-state expansion could be preempted by a federal mandate. As the vice president recently told a Denver audience, "If you elect me president, I will make high-quality preschool available to every child."

Naturally, public officials hedge when asked whether preschool should be mandatory. But supporters call it a "necessity" for every child, a clear indication that calls for compulsory attendance loom in the shadows. Vermont legislator Bill Suchmann, for example, who introduced a bill to study the cost of compulsory preschool, denies that he advocates compulsory attendance—but says only compulsion can guarantee "equal educational opportunity."



Kevin Chadwick

The theory is that putting kids on the "right track" will get them to the "right destination." Gore explains, "The right kind of start—through quality preschool—can lead to higher IQs, higher reading and achievement levels, higher graduation rates, and greater success in the workplace." Yet, after hundreds of experimental preschool intervention programs over more than thirty years, there is no evidence that preschool is the cure-all Gore describes.

Supporters of universal preschool, like the church leaders who dismissed the Copernican theory of the solar system, prefer their convictions to the evidence. They invariably point to the Perry Preschool Project to show that preschool confers lasting benefits on kids. That 1960s project tracked 123 children deemed "at-risk" through age 27. Half of them attended preschool as 3- and 4-year-olds, the other half didn't. According to the research team, "Program participation had positive effects on adult crime, earnings, wealth, welfare dependence, and commitment to marriage." The Perry research team seized on these results to produce the oft-cited "fact" that preschool provides "taxpayers a return on investment of $7.16 on the dollar."

It wasn't long before independent peer reviewers uncovered sizable sampling and methodological flaws in the Perry study. For example, preschool participants, but not the control group, had to have a parent at home during the day, which might have inflated the Perry findings. More important, in three decades the Perry results have never been replicated. Undeterred, both the California Department of Education and the New York State Board of Regents recently relied on the spurious cost-benefit analysis of the Perry Preschool Project to garner support for their universal preschool legislation.

Preschool proponents also shrug off inconvenient findings from Head Start, the federally funded preschool program for low-income children. Like universal preschool, Head Start is largely public-school-based, serves 3- and 4-year-olds, and espouses the mission of "school readiness." As the nation's largest and oldest preschool program, Head Start is filled with lessons for educators.

The most comprehensive synthesis of Head Start impact studies to date was published in 1985 by the Department of Health and Human Services. It showed that by the time children enter the second grade, any cognitive, social, and emotional gains by Head Start children have vanished. By second grade, that is, the achievement test scores, IQs, achievement-motivation scores, self-esteem, and social behavior scores of Head Start students are indistinguishable from those of

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their demographically comparable peers. The net gain to children and taxpayers is zero.

The first line of defense for Head Start proponents is to complain that the program has had too little money and too little time. But it has spent $35 billion over 34 years, which ought to be enough money and time to create a successful program if that were possible.

The second line of defense is to blame public schools. Head Start defenders claim that the benefits of preschool would be sustained if public schools shaped up. But there is no evidence to support this theory. And even if there were, there is little reason to think that the public schools will rise to the task.

Take Goals 2000, the plan hatched by President Bush and the nation's governors in 1990. One goal was for American schools to rank first internationally in math and science. The most recent findings of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study place U.S. twelfth graders 19th out of 21 countries in math and 16th out of 21 countries in science. Another goal was safe classrooms. A joint report of the National Center for Education Statistics and Bureau of Justice Statistics published in 1998 shows that more than half the nation's public schools experienced serious crimes in the past few years. Maybe the public schools, too, just "need more time."

The most common line of defense is simply to deny the facts, although a few educators have been willing to be honest. Consider the views of child-development scholar Edward Zigler, a founder of Head Start and director of Yale University's Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy. As far back as 1987, when educators were debating the merits of universal preschool, he warned, "This is not the first time universal preschool education has been proposed. . . . [In the past], as now, the arguments in favor of preschool education were that it would reduce school failure, lower dropout rates, increase test scores, and produce a generation of more competent high school graduates. . . . Preschool education will achieve none of these results."

What Zigler recognized is that a child's academic performance and personal growth turn on a lot more than preschool. Factors such as genetics, family, neighborhood, and life experiences from birth onward easily outweigh the influence of preschool. Preschools may teach children how to count, follow directions, and get along; Zigler himself favors universal preschool as a means to achieve school readiness. But preschool alone confers no lasting advantage. To put all children on an equal footing would require genetic engineering, surrogate parents, and for many kids, homes away from home.

In any case, the desirability of universal preschool should not hinge only on whether preschool works. Even more basic is the moral question of whether the government should entrench itself still further in the schooling of children. On this question, Al Gore and his allies are swimming against a powerful tide—witness the grass-roots movement sweeping through the states, offering charter schools, home-schooling, multi-million-dollar private scholarship funds, vouchers, and tax credits. Parents are working to loosen the government's grip on K-12 education, even as the vice president is seeking to extend that hold to preschoolers. The most effective education reforms of the 1990s have featured decentralization, greater parental involvement, and private alternatives—while universal preschool is a throwback to the era of "government knows best."

Darcy Ann Olsen is a policy analyst on children's issues at the Cato Institute.

Illegal Services on the Hill

by Sam Dealey

Last Tuesday the Legal Services Corporation celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary with a tea party at the White House. "Of course," said the first lady, herself a former LSC chairman, "we've all encountered people who don't believe in legal services for the poor. We still have to fight for every penny we get from Congress."

Set up in 1974 by President Nixon as a compromise between opposing forces in the War on Poverty, Legal Services receives 60 percent of its funding from the federal government. Its stated mission is to represent the poor in routine civil matters. But its ambitions have always been far more grandiose than helping the poor with run-of-the mill landlord disputes and the like. Why dispense store-front lawyering, when you can change the social structure through class-action lawsuits?

When its original legislation expired in 1980, Congress continued to fund LSC on a yearly basis. In 1995, the GOP slashed the corporation's budget from

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$400 million to $278, set a three year sunset on federal funding, and saddled the agency with a host of reforms. Every year since, the Appropriations Committee has sought to cut its funding almost by half. And every year, Democrats, with the aid of some Republicans, have been able to restore full funding on the House floor.

"The GOP goes through this game every year—cutting it in committee and then fighting it out on the floor," says Democrat Howard Berman, a staunch LSC backer. "And their leadership knows they'll lose. I think they realize it and still go through this pro forma dance."

That Democrats come to LSC's rescue isn't surprising. But what about Republicans, 57 of them just last year? Having reformed LSC in 1995, it seems, many Republicans now have a proprietary interest in its future. Says Rep. Jim Ramstad of Minnesota, who last week received the LSC's "Outstanding Commitment to Justice" award: "Certain members are still fighting against Legal Services from the old days. Most of those abuses were taken care of in our reform bill." Rep. Tom Davis says, "Understand this: In 1995 we put a number of prohibitions on where they could sue, how they could sue, who they could sue. We eliminated all that stuff," meaning prosecutorial abuses.

Is the agency truly reformed? Hardly. In December 1998, LSC, which is restricted from political activities, held a "youth issues" conference in a Puerto Rico beach resort and casino featuring a variety of left-wing advocacy groups. In February 1998, LSC lawyers were caught on videotape in Mexico recruiting ineligible and alien migrant farm workers to sue North Carolina farmers.

And now a new reason to be wary of the agency: In May 1998, LSC handed over to Congress its annual *Fact Book*, which contains information members use to set funding. The *Fact Book* stated that LSC's caseload had increased in 1997 to nearly two million clients. Six months later, Congress appropriated an additional $17 million for LSC. But LSC had grossly inflated its caseload. What's more, evidence suggests that it did so knowingly. "They knew in the summer that the numbers were completely false," says Ken Boehm, chairman of the National Legal and Policy Center and a former LSC board member. "They had an obligation, to put it mildly, to tell Congress that their numbers were not accurate."

Meanwhile, in June 1998, just a month after the *Fact Book* was issued, LSC's inspector general, its ethics watchdog, informed the agency's brass of "astounding" discrepancies between LSC's actual caseload and what it reported. In September, the IG disclosed in an internal document that "the numbers provided to Congress were inaccurate."

But, in his semi-annual report to Congress a month later, the IG didn't even mention it. When asked about "significant problems, abuses and deficiencies," the IG said there were "none." House appropriators only found out about the chicanery in late February 1999, when Republican Tom Latham of Iowa was contacted by a whistleblower in the IG's office. Days later, at a March 3 funding hearing (LSC

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requested $340 million for this year), the LSC finally owned up to cooking its numbers—partly. Doug Eakeley, LSC's current board chairman, counters disingenuously, "The IG's report was only in its draft form," and thus not official.

Two months later, Republican overseers, led by majority leader Richard Armey, instructed the General Accounting Office to audit the five largest LSC grantees: Baltimore, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, and San Juan. In its preliminary report, the GAO reveals that, of the 221,000 cases these grantees reported as closed, nearly 75,000 were "questionable."

The GAO found that LSC "reported duplicate cases for the same legal service to the same client"; "some cases showed no documentation, as required," that the client was a U.S. citizen, an eligible alien, or financially eligible; other cases were listed as closed although "case files showed no grantee activity during the 12 months" prior. One lawyer who quit LSC out of disgust recently wrote that "virtually every telephone call [was counted] as a 'case' in order to build up numbers to report to the LSC and other funding sources."

The GAO also found that New York City's LSC grantee misreported 36 to 48 percent of their 1997 caseload. Two weeks ago, the Justice Department awarded the Brooklyn LSC, which falls under the New York umbrella, an additional $572,000.

The LSC has responded by "revising" its reporting guidelines. "It was a very outmoded system," says Eakeley, LSC's board chairman. As to the lies LSC told Congress, he says the inspector general had a "beef" with the agency and that he "exaggerated what happened in the field and its significance." Besides, Eakeley says, LSC's funding isn't determined by the corporation's caseload, but by the number of people living below the poverty line. Which is technically true.

But, Congress and LSC both know the importance of the caseload numbers contained in the *Fact Book*. Republican Hal Rogers of Kentucky said, "We do make our judgments based on the volume of the load that is presented to us." A year earlier, LSC president John McKay said of the *Fact Book*: "We think this publication provides overwhelming documentation of LSC's success in achieving its mission, and we hope that it will build further support for the program in Congress and among the public."

Support for LSC has eroded somewhat among House Republicans, but don't expect much. "Lawyers always misrepresent their caseload to clients," says Rep. Davis, as he launches into a joke about a lawyer who dies and goes to heaven. "I'm only 38, what am I doing here?" the lawyer asks St. Peter. "Yeah, we bring lawyers in based on the number of hours they've billed," St. Peter answers. Davis will probably support the LSC again, as will others. Legal Services "is on the hit-list," says Rep. Castle of Delaware, "but in the end everybody has enough sense not to get rid of it."

In a recent letter to attorney general Janet Reno protesting the Brooklyn award, Armey wrote, "LSC must be held accountable to the American people. We simply cannot reward this kind of misrepresentation." Republicans, too, should be held accountable if LSC goes unpunished.

Sam Dealey is a staff writer for the **Hill** *newspaper.*

Time for a Two-China Policy

by John R. Bolton

Taipei, Taiwan

Watching the Clinton administration criticize Taiwan's president Lee Teng-hui for calling his government a "state," it is tempting to ask how Ronald Reagan would have reacted. This is far from an academic question, at a time when Republican presidential candidates and others are striving to formulate a post-Clinton foreign policy. It turns out that early in the 1980 campaign, candidate Reagan said he wanted to restore full diplomatic recognition to the Republic of China.

Speaking here last week to international scholars and policy analysts at a conference on security issues in the Taiwan Straits, President Lee was emphatic in reaffirming that there is a "special state-to-state relationship" between the People's Republic of China, on the mainland, and the Republic of China, on Taiwan. In prepared remarks and in answers to questions, a poised and confident Lee deliberately used words like "sovereignty" and "independent state" to refer to the ROC. In important ways, of course, Lee's comments reflect no real departure from his policies over the last six years, especially Taiwan's efforts to gain representation in the United Nations. As for the timing of the remarks, high-level but "unofficial" cross-straits talks are scheduled imminently, and Lee wants them conducted on the basis of equality.

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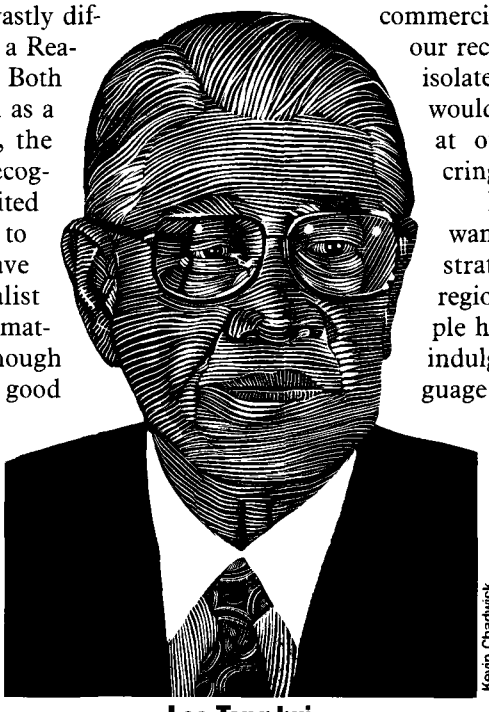
Taiwan is unquestionably a "state" within any conventional use of that term in common parlance or in international law. It is a clearly defined territory with an identifiable population and a stable government carrying out typical governmental functions, able to meet international commitments and obligations. Exactly the same is true of the People's Republic. This assertion is not philosophical, but entirely practical and empirical. To acknowledge diplomatically that two "states" face each other across the Taiwan Straits is not to grant either one of them ethical approval or to imply that they should remain forever separate.

It is true that in 1980 some of his top campaign advisers ultimately talked Reagan out of espousing full diplomatic recognition of Taiwan. But today, almost twenty years later and in vastly different circumstances, what would a Reaganite policy on Taiwan look like? Both for compelling moral reasons and as a matter of U.S. national interests, the Reaganite answer is diplomatic recognition. This is not because the United States has any theological devotion to Taiwan, although Taiwan does have the advantage of being a capitalist democracy. Nor does it reflect automatic antipathy toward the PRC, although currently there is almost nothing good one can say about Beijing's policies, from its proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to its nuclear espionage against the United States.


Kevin Chadwick

Lee Teng-hui

Rather, full diplomatic recognition of Taiwan would advance key American interests by ratifying the self-evident reality on the island, and by shattering the Clinton policy of deference toward Beijing. The United States desperately needs to create a balance-of-power structure in East Asia, building on existing alliances with Japan and South Korea. This would not be a traditional alliance like NATO, at least in the foreseeable future, but it would encompass something more than the ad hoc relations that now exist. Upgrading the Washington-Taipei relationship would be a major step toward creating such a regional balance.

By contrast, the Clinton administration believes that deferring to Beijing will prompt the leaders there to moderate the scarcely veiled threats with which they responded to President Lee's remarks. But Beijing has the Clinton administration's number, and each U.S. act of deference simply expands the PRC's appetite. Moreover, Japan and South Korea interpret our deference to Beijing as an implicit rejection of partnership with them. They conclude that the United States simply cannot be counted on to protect our mutual interests in the region. If this continues, Japan will be tempted to proceed more often unilaterally, no gain for Asian stability, while Seoul may gravitate into Beijing's orbit, before, and even more after, reunification with North Korea. None of this would be in America's interest, but it would flow inevitably from Washington's deference to the PRC.

Indeed, the only objection to full diplomatic recognition of Taiwan is that Beijing would erupt in rhetorical outrage, perhaps including threats of military force, and would attempt economic reprisals against the United States such as the cancellation of commercial contracts. At least for a period, our recognition of Taipei would leave us isolated. Some of our European friends would welcome an opportunity to profit at our expense, and others would cringe before Beijing's fulminations.

But diplomatic recognition of Taiwan would be just the kind of demonstration of U.S. leadership that the region needs and that many of its people hope for. For too long, Beijing has indulged in angry and intemperate language reminiscent of Nikita Khrushchev's performance at the United Nations when he pounded his shoe on his desk to express displeasure. Beijing should understand that such carrying on is not acceptable. The notion that China would actually respond with force is a fantasy, albeit one the Communist leaders welcome and encourage in the West.

The ultimate result of our extending recognition to Taiwan would be enhanced peace and stability in East Asia. Once it were clear that the United States would not permit the PRC to bully Taiwan, the prospects for peaceful cross-straits ties would grow, not diminish. Beijing's temptation to adventurism throughout the region—which the Clinton administration's deference feeds—would shrink. This may sound familiar: It is what a truly Reaganite foreign policy produces. It has worked before. Will Republican candidates embrace it?

John R. Bolton is senior vice president of the American Enterprise Institute. During the Bush administration, he was assistant secretary of state for international organization affairs.

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BODY SLAM

Jesse Ventura, Ross Perot, and the Lunacy of the Reform Party

By Matt Labash

Dearborn, Michigan

Dearborn is a town that has known its share of nutjobs. Auto magnate Henry Ford, who practically owned the Detroit suburb, was so fanatically opposed to Ford executives' smoking in his country club that he had his driver seize their cigars, which he roasted in a public bonfire. After being fined for libeling a political opponent, Dearborn's late mayor, the 360-lb. Orville Hubbard, once crossed the Detroit River to Ontario to install a "government in exile."

But for the highest concentration of characters ever to congregate in Dearborn, consider the assemblage at the Hyatt Regency this late-July weekend. Here, men travel the halls wearing plastic cheese heads not because they are from Wisconsin, but because they want their kids to recognize them on C-Span. Here, people adorn their T-shirts from the hotel gift-shop with enough clanking badges to earn them dinner shifts at Ruby Tuesday's. Here, a sworn enemy of "the petro-chemical, pharmaceutical, military-industrial, transnational fascist assault on the American way of life," in the words of one attendee, can find a helpmate. Here, you've probably guessed, is the Reform Party National Convention.

THIS IS A PLACE FOR MALCONTENTS. THESE PEOPLE ARE UNITED NOT IN IDEOLOGY—THEY HAVE NONE—BUT IN DISDAIN FOR THE TWO-PARTY SYSTEM.

It is a place for malcontents and disconnects, third-rate politicians and pamphleteers with bleeding ulcers. It is a big teepee, with no flap—where Patriot party members smoke the peace pipe with neo-Marxist New Alliance loyalists. The people gathered here are united not in ideology—they have none—but in their disdain for the two-party system. In their midst, the forces of billionaire Reform party founder Ross Perot are pitted against the forces of Jesse Ventura, pro-wrestler-turned-Minnesota-governor, and they are squaring off in [insert obligatory wrestling metaphor here].

Matt Labash is a staff writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

But besides that, this is a place that Shar Johnson calls home. Shar would be welcome at a major-party convention—in the protest pit, where the hoi polloi in their sandwich boards are kept cordoned a safe distance from anything that matters. At the Reform Party National Convention, however, Shar stands a good chance of becoming the party's national secretary—one of four officers to be elected by the 351 delegates who have flown in at their own expense.

It isn't as though Shar doesn't deserve it. But she does seem afraid that I might think she's "one of those wackos," as she says in a sharp Michigan accent. Not because she races Corvettes—with only one car on the track at a time. Or because she wears a red-white-and-blue sequined vest ($35 from a fruit market in Lansing) and baked a cake for the entire convention ("Shar's Michigan Cake" is listed on the schedule). What Shar is worried about is the perceived intensity of her devotion, though "devotion" might not adequately convey the intensity.

Back in 1992, when Perot launched the candidacy that eventually launched the Reform party, he stumped in Michigan, where Shar served him some of her rainbow-chip cake. As she cleared Perot's plate from the table, she says, "it looked just like any plate." But it wasn't. "It was Ross's," she says. Luckily, her husband was thinking ahead. "He said, 'Ya know, Shar, that may well belong to the next president of the United States,'" she recalls. "All of a sudden, it was like, TOUCH THAT STUFF AND YOU'RE DEAD MEAT!"

Since cake decorating is her profession, and since she already had an autographed picture of Perot, Shar thought it would be appropriate to commemorate the encounter. So she framed the whole kit and caboodle, as they say in Lansing: the picture, the plate, the fork, the napkin, even, she says, "one little piece of cake left on the plate with icing. It was crusty as hell.

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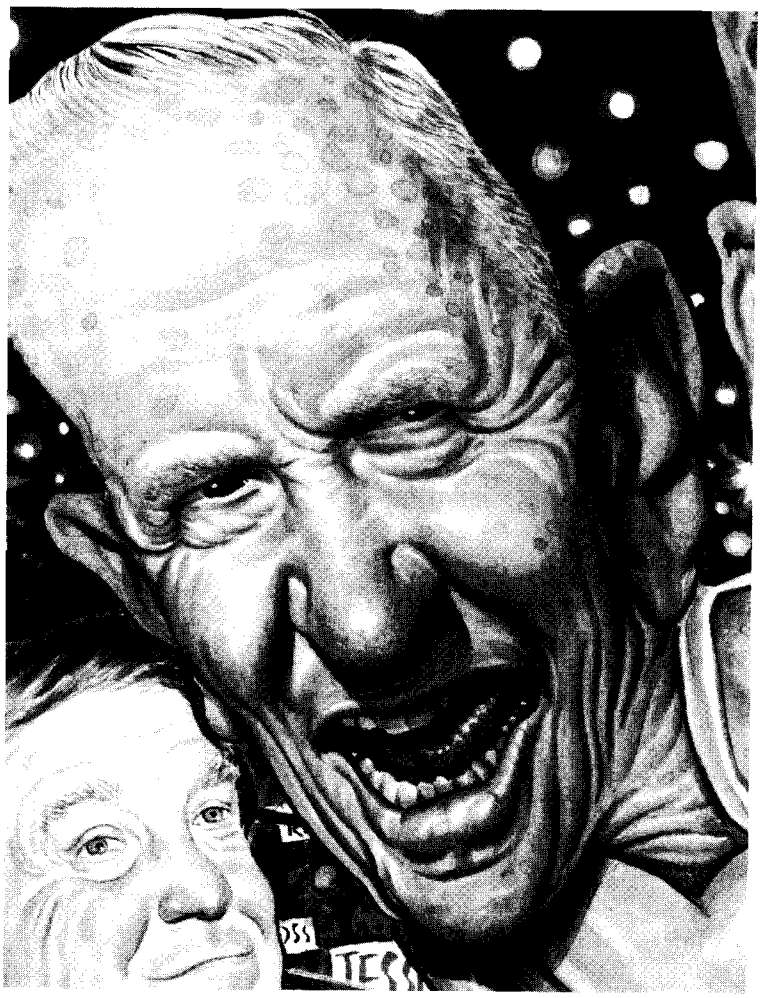
For the last seven years, it's hung in my foyer."

Sure, Shar may do something quirky now and then: like the time congressman Jim Traficant made a late-night stop in Michigan to address the Reform party and ended up staying in Shar's guest bedroom. Later, when washing his bed linens, Shar plucked her dryer's lint trap for a keepsake. But that hasn't diminished her fitness to be Reform party secretary, as evidenced by the 15 or so endorsements from state-party-chair types advertised on her neon pink campaign flyers.

Shar has long been a volunteer, and Ross has always said the volunteers are what the party's all about (Perot would put money on that, and has several times, by hiring private investigators to keep tabs on them). Volunteer long enough in an anti-politics party, and it's only natural to want to assume a position of political prominence. In the Reform party, almost everyone does.



Drew Friedman

Take Tom McLaughlin. Tom is a volunteer from Pennsylvania who is running for party chair. He'll lose. Rebounding within an hour, he'll run for vice-chair. He'll lose again. But Tom's no loser. He's the chairman of the Rules Committee, and with "over twenty-two years experience in Quality Assurance verifying compliance with codes, specifications and regulatory requirements," as his candidate bio tantalizes, he's ideally suited for the job.

The Rules Committee isn't just stacked with Rules-Committee types like Tom, frustrated parliamentarians who, back home, wreak havoc on neighborhood-association charters and the bylaws of their church. ("We have people who read *Robert's Rules of Order* every night before they go to bed," says Donna Donovan, the Reform party's self-effacing press secretary.) But the term Rules Committee is itself a misnomer. For "committee" suggests a fixed number of decision-makers, be they elected or appointed, who conduct the tricky business of amending a party's constitution. Most political parties wouldn't entrust that responsibility to just anybody. But the Reformers trust *everybody.*

In an unmiked conference room, where delegates keep shouting down speakers with, "Louder!" almost anyone who enters the meeting can vote on the 40 proposed amendments to the party constitution. A non-delegate can vote, a non-uniformed janitor can vote, even a journalist can vote. Technically, you're not permitted to. But as an experiment in bottom-up democracy, I sit nonchalantly, my press pass out of sight, and vote my conscience.

Such openness might lead one to expect an engaging debate. One would be wrong. Instead, many speak, in a sort of mind-numbing babble of passionate pronouncements and non-sequiturs. Take John from Nebraska, whose heaving torso taxes his shirt buttons as he barks, apropos of nothing, "How many people here ate breakfast this morning? Do you know where your breakfast came from—it came from a farmer! Farmers are the ones we should be representing." The gentleman from Farm Aid takes his seat to confused applause, but few get off so easy. There is bickering. Lots of it. In fact, there are whole rooms set up expressly for that purpose.

Next to the Rules Committee is the Credentials Committee, where splinter groups from four states press their claim to being the legitimate Reform party chapter in order to seat their delegates. Next door is a monitoring room, where spectators can observe the arguments and argue about them. They not only

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argue, they bang out pamphlets. These are written as they would be spoken—with emphasis. On a pamphlet shoved at me by one of the splinter delegations from New Jersey, there are 510 words on the page, of which 276 are underlined.

Despite all the quarrels, Jeanne Doogs, the Texas state party chair, sits stoically outside the credentials battlefield, putting a sunny face on all the strife. "People are fighting to get into our party," she says, though five states didn't bother sending delegates. Jeanne looks as a Texas delegate should look—silver hair, shiny pumps, Betsy Ross color-coordination. But as she tries to explain how two New Jersey delegations' rival claims were settled in court, an eavesdropping Illinois delegate nearly lunges over the table at her: "Don't tell the press the case has been settled! How can you say that? That's an outright lie!!!"

His outburst is a hit-and-run, and he disappears into the bowels of the hotel. Jeanne regains her composure, paging through her binder as if she's just shooed a fly. "We have those kind of people here," she says. "And we have some that are worse. I think he's being polite—he hasn't smacked me yet."

THE DELEGATES ARGUE SO LONG ABOUT CREDENTIALS AND INTRA-PARTY RIFTS THEY NEVER QUITE GET AROUND TO VOTING ON THEIR PLATFORM.

It's understandable that tensions permeate this convocation. There are so many factions in the Reform party that, in keeping with its founder's paranoia, the entire convention seems fueled by mutual suspicion. The Perotistas don't trust the Venturans, as Jesse got elected governor of Minnesota without any help from Perot and has taken to saying publicly that it's time somebody else was Reform's candidate for president. Ventura is the party's only elected star, unless one counts the city council member from Greer, South Carolina, or the school board member from Huntington County, Pennsylvania. But Ventura has vowed to serve out his term as governor and not run for president in 2000. Instead, he's endorsed everyone from Colin Powell (who has declined) to John McCain (who has declined) to former governor Lowell Weicker (who has not declined, but who seems so disliked within the party that even party spokeswoman Donna Donovan, who once worked for Weicker before he flip-flopped on a no-new-taxes pledge, says if Weicker won, "I'd have to think about leaving").

Still, if Ventura could further wrest the party from Perot by playing kingmaker with Weicker, he'd neutralize one of the stock criticisms of Reform. Weicker could transform what has been a cult of personality under Perot to a cult with no personality. Weicker is fairly weak tea by the Reformers' standards; when he left the Republicans to start his own party in Connecticut, he unimaginatively called it "A Connecticut Party."

But without a personality (or Perot's deep-pockets), it is hard to see what the Reform party *is*, besides a homely cousin to the Republicans and Democrats. Its $12.5 million in matching funds in the next election cycle boosts its attractiveness to second-tier candidates contemplating a third-party run. Ventura has nixed Pat Buchanan as a presidential candidate for his emphasis on social issues; ideology doesn't motivate the Reformer masses. "We're building a non-ideological party," says Lenora Fulani, perennial black-radical candidate for president and a fierce party-builder for Reform. Fulani loses in a squeaker for vice chair at the convention, perhaps because some consider her a Communist, though she finds labels "deadening."

Besides campaign finance reform and term limits—which address how candidates achieve office and when they leave, but not what they do while there—it's hard to find any issues that animate Reformers. So intent are they on having it both ways—on calling Republicans and Democrats identical twins, while also claiming their ideological extremes control the parties' agendas—that issues for Reformers seem almost an afterthought. Process is a much higher priority, and at this convention, the delegates argue so long about credentials and intra-party squabbles that they never quite get around to debating and voting on their platform (or even electing two of their four officers—sorry, Shar).

Such chaos could make the party ripe for a hostile takeover, especially since nearly one-fifth of the Reform party's districts have no delegates at the convention. And in what has become the nineties version of Richard J. Daley's Chicago, the Reform party will again use its Internet/call-in voting system, where anybody can request a ballot, and some people get two or three. Consequently, the convention con-

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course feels like *The Third Man* bar in post-World War II Vienna—nobody's quite sure who the other guy is working for. Every couple of feet, there's another clipboard with some petitioner trying to draft Ralph Nader or David Boren or Colin Powell.

There are official contenders for the presidential nomination, too, though you haven't heard of them—yet. Harvey Powell, a 34-year-old Kentucky real-estate broker has declared for president. He's still not of age, but that doesn't mean he's shy of experience. Harvey says he's done consulting work for Clinton, helped maintain a multinational coalition against Saddam Hussein, and, through a covert fax system he worked out with a Secret Service agent, controlled nearly everything George Bush said during his presidency. "I had him saying silly stuff during the Gulf War," Harvey confides, "just to ensure that I was still pulling the strings."

But the biggest mystery of the convention is the candidacy of Donald Trump. After a cryptic statement from Trump seeming to deny that he was running, the *New York Times* reported that Trump had pulled the plug on his potential candidacy. But somebody in Dearborn isn't taking him at his word. Everywhere you look in the hotel, you see The Donald's albino-caterpillar eyebrows and the hair that looks like an abandoned nest. Trump is not here in person, but slick Trump 2000 posters were apparently put up by two different sets of Reformers who say they are acting of their own accord, though they both throw parties in posh hospitality suites featuring open bars.

Russ Verney, who is stepping down as chairman of the Reform party after choosing not to run for reelection, smells a rat, or, more precisely, a short-fingered Vulgarian, as *Spy* magazine used to call The Donald. In fact, rumors persist all weekend that covert forces are pushing the candidacy even though Trump himself says he's not running.

It's easy to dismiss Verney as paranoid since he works for Perot, a man convinced that Vietnamese-backed assassins showed up on his front lawn in Dallas. But sources close to one of the Trump 2000 draft groups say that Roger Stone, the former political consultant who does consulting work for Trump on his business deals, is working behind the scenes with some associates to rally support for The Donald. According to several sources, William von Raab, U.S. customs commissioner under Ronald Reagan, and

Drew Friedman

Dominic Del Papa, a consultant, are pushing a Trump candidacy.

Though von Raab does not return calls seeking comment, I bump into Del Papa at the convention. He tells me the suggestion is ridiculous. Neither he nor von Raab, with whom he works, is supporting Donald Trump. As evidence, he hands me a draft Buchanan for president press release with von Raab's name on it (von Raab was a co-chair in Buchanan's '92 campaign). I ask Del Papa where he can be reached, and he gives me a cellphone number with no company affiliation. "It's just myself," he says, though he says he's worked with Stone before. When I call the Icon public relations firm where Stone works, the receptionist tells me that both von Raab and Del Papa have numbers at the firm.

Stone says the charges that he's behind the Trump groundswell are ridiculous. "Paranoia seems to run rampant [in the Reform Party]," says Stone. "Russ Verney has lost control of his party." Yes,

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Stone admits, he was in Detroit on Trump casino business, and, yes, he did swing by the Hyatt the day before the convention just to "see what it was like." He also met one of the draft Trump volunteers in the lobby. "I'm not sure what that proves," says Stone. "I think the guy is kind of flaky." But though Stone would "love to see Mr. Trump run, no, this is not an effort orchestrated by me and certainly not by Mr. Trump," says Stone, adding, "Mr. Trump is most litigious, so be very careful." Maybe Verney is paranoid, but even Perotistas have enemies.

Trump, however, is a minor subplot at the convention. The real friction comes between the Ventura and Perot camps. Neither principal makes a strong showing in person. Perot breezes through to fire up the volunteers with his folksy anti-elitist boilerplate, but he flees the premises before Shar can even serve him a piece of cake. Ventura, who teleconferences with the delegates after his flight is canceled because of inclement weather, gains the advantage when his candidate to replace Russ Verney as party chair beats the Perotistas' favorite.

PEROT BREEZES THROUGH TO FIRE UP THE VOLUNTEERS WITH HIS FOLKSY ANTI-ELITIST BOILERPLATE, BUT FLEES BEFORE THE CHAOS SETS IN.

Jesse's man, the garrulous Jack Gargan, is a former chicken farmer who has publicly discussed his concern about a Y2K Armageddon. As befits one whose campaign literature boasts that he has given over five gallons of blood, Gargan has his share of enemies—namely Donna Donovan, the Reform party's (and the Perot camp's) spokeswoman. Donna says Gargan feels the same about her. As Gargan is declared the winner, standing on his chair to wave Tricky Dick victory signs, he turned to her, according to Donovan, and said, "You're through."

But there is somebody Donna dislikes more than Gargan. That would be Phil Madsen. Madsen has been called the "most despised man in the Reform party." He joined up with the Perotistas back in 1992, and has been agitating against them ever since—criticizing the leadership, pushing for a more open, democratic party, and ingratiating himself with Ventura, who has made Phil his Webmaster, one of his spokesmen, and a salesman of Jesse Ventura action figures (a $25 bargain).

If Ross and Jesse won't openly spar with each other, Phil and Donna have no such compunction. Donna tells me Phil's nickname is "Madman." He calls her "my nemesis on the Internet." I do what anyone interested in the future of the Reform party would do. I invite them to gouge each other's eyes out over lunch.

Ordering a plate of potato skins in a hotel restaurant booth, we sip Pepsi through bendy straws until Phil and Donna start going at it like two ferrets in a pillow case. Donna says that Jesse's action figures are made in China. Phil counters, saying Donna withheld the delegate lists to hamstring Gargan's campaign. Donna hits Phil below the belt, suggesting that wrestling is fake. Donna reminds Phil that he made her cry by calling her "stupid" at the '97 Nashville convention. Phil doesn't remember, but feigns a stabbing motion, as he is not happy she brought this up in front of a reporter. "Next time," he says, "leave the knife in the back."

"I do it right up front," says Donna, "don't worry about your back."

And so it goes, for about half an hour. We're not in a hurry to get back to the convention, which has turned into utter chaos. Three open mikes stand perpetually manned, by delegates still thrilled to be in Dearborn, directing our attention to the "the" in Paragraph 1, Section A, Subsection 2, Vivisection B. They alternately cheer and heckle each other, yelling out all manner of admonitions: "Buncha whores!" "Clinton sucks!" "Give us Barabbas!" And then there are the votes. In this, the most democratic of parties, they vote on everything. They vote on whether to move the media to the back of the room. They vote on whether to allow delegates to move their luggage to the lobby for checkout. They vote on how to count the votes. An actual quote from the actual committee chair: "How many people want to vote on taking the vote?"

Party-building is not a pretty thing. It's enough to make even the party architects recoil. As Phil says, before sucking another hit of Pepsi through his straw, "In business, you have to demonstrate an ability to produce something that people agree is valuable. In sports, you have to have athletic ability to compete and win. In politics, there is no barrier to entry whatsoever. So any idiot can get involved in politics, and most idiots do." ♦

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A Land Without Conservatives

or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Paul Weyrich

By David Brooks

Adelaide, Australia

I had to travel half way around the world to realize how much I appreciate Paul Weyrich. As you may know, Weyrich is the longtime conservative activist who helped found the Heritage Foundation, National Empowerment Television, and the Free Congress Foundation. Normally, he sets my teeth on edge because he always seems to be disgruntled about something. But a few weeks ago I went to Australia, where there are no Paul Weyrichs. Nor are there any of the other unusual specimens that give conservative life in America its special flavor. There are no blank-slate slit-skirt TV pundettes, no Clinton-crazed carpet-fiber conspiracy nuts, no late-night tax-cut obsessives, no Trilat-mad America Firsters. The whole aromatic bouquet of wing-nut, arm-growing-out-of-their-forehead, right-of-center moon-howlers is almost entirely absent from the Land Down Under.

And I discovered that as annoying as some right-wingers can be, life without them is infinitely worse.

I was in Australia to take part in something called the Adelaide Festival of Ideas. As I am sure you are aware, South Australia is known as "The Festival State" (it says so on the license plates), so when they have a conference to talk about things, it can't just be a panel discussion, it has to be a festival. With cash infusions from the government and Nokia, the Finnish cell phone people, the organizers invited some of the keenest intellects from around the globe to take part in this carnival of the mind, and the ones who were willing to spend 50 hours on an airplane so they could give a speech and sit on some panels were assembled at various venues in Adelaide over an extended weekend earlier this month. I felt compelled to accept the invitation because who can resist the opportunity to share a podium with two or three dozen feminist-lesbian-Aborigine novelists? Even for someone who spends much of his life being the token conservative at pseudo-intellectual gatherings, this would be a challenge of Himalayan proportions.

As it transpired, no Aborigine lesbian novelists ended up attending—there were no non-white people of any sort on the podium or in the audiences—but there were enough post-colonial feminist theorists, Marxist economists and Trotskyite agitators, and cyber-punk revolutionaries to keep things interesting.

The event was remarkably well attended. Audiences ranged from several hundred to a few thousand. Adelaidians seem to hunger for panel discussions (and they even had to pay for the ones at the opera house in the evening). The organizers didn't advertise any topic for my solo presentation. So the locals were presented with a speaker they had never heard of who was going to talk on a subject they had no clue about, and still enough people showed up to fill a small auditorium. I felt like talking about my digestive system for an hour just to teach them to be more discerning.

But the more amazing feature of the event was how left-wing it was. There must be conservatives or moderates in Australia, but they are apparently so cut off from intellectual life they don't bother to come out to an event like this. In session after session, the questions from the audience were unrelentingly pinko: When would the CIA stop disrupting workers' movements around the globe? Isn't it awful the way transnational corporations have conspired to keep the truth from the world's oppressed workers? Even after a sober, scientific panel discussion on cloning, the questions were straight out of the Spartacist Youth League songbook: Would the military-industrial complex create mindless worker clones and soldier clones in order to displace members of the working class? Then there were two questions based on the Gaia theory: A young woman and then an older man pointed out that we are threatening the Earth Mother with our overpopulation. Wasn't modern medicine a mistake?

You almost never get questions like this at Ameri-

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can events. Even on university campuses, you might get one or two questions this left-wing, but there is usually a ripple of nervousness through the audience. Apparently the intellectual circles of Australia are several notches to the left of those here. Most panelists were simpatico, though more sophisticated. One speaker used a panel discussion on the media to launch an impassioned plea for what amounted to the 1970s Swedish welfare state. The two stars of the event were Hanan Ashrawi, the Christian Palestinian woman who is a favorite of Mideast journalists, and a woman named Beatrix Campbell, a British feminist who explicitly defended the Loony Left and Red Ken Livingstone, the London leader who was its symbol.

I sat in the audience during Campbell's talk and was surrounded by middle-aged women, several of whom were yipping their approval at every sentence. She would talk about the patriarchy—even ironically—and they would yip. She would lambaste Tony Blair for deviationism, and they would yip. She attacked a former socialist who had revised his views on the welfare state and they yipped along with that. Then she asked if anybody in her audience had heard of the man she was attacking—Norman Dennis—and none had.

The striking thing was not merely that the event was further left than comparable ones in America. It was the particular brand of leftism on offer. It was leftism circa 1980. Whether the subject was macroeconomics, poverty, racial matters, or relations between the sexes, I kept hearing phrases and attitudes that I hadn't heard for two decades. Cast your mind back to the No Nukes concerts that Jackson Browne used to headline, or to the anti-Thatcher howls of outrage that emanated from London literary circles around 1981. Recall the European peace protests before the deployment of the Pershing missiles in 1982. This was the flavor. Whatever the subject under discussion, I kept having the urge to stand up and be obnoxious, "Yes, we used to have these debates, and in a few years this is how your argument is going to turn out."

It's a reminder of how dramatically the debate in the United States has shifted over the past 20 years. Our feminists are second or third-generation feminists. Our left-wing economists are people like Robert Reich and Robert Kuttner, who don't see the world in classic class-war terms. Our liberal political consultants are people like Stanley Greenberg, who have left behind earlier radicalism of the sort that still prevailed in Adelaide.

Peter Steiner

Why should there be such a large gap between the American debate and the Australian debate? This is supposed to be the information age, when ideas and concepts flow instantly through cyberspace. Don't all those Cisco commercials keep reminding us that we are all one planet united by the Internet. Don't Nicholas Negroponte and all those cybertheorists tell us that Distance is Dead? When I returned, I mentioned this phenomenon to a friend who has migrated to Washington from another country. His response was simple: "That's what it means to be a superpower." The future happens here first.

Americans used to defer to German philosophy or French novels or Scandinavian films, supposing that the big ideas would originate in Europe and then come here. But who feels that way today? On the contrary—just to stick with the grubby world of politics—now it is American political consultants who are hired around the world to package messages and campaigns. It's American public policy and management thinkers such as Francis Fukuyama, Sam Huntington, Peter Drucker, Michael Novak, Michael Porter, and Jeffrey Sachs, who seem to have a much greater influence abroad than any foreign thinkers have on America. Through much of the 20th century, when

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the expanding welfare state seemed like the wave of the future, most of the cutting-edge reforms happened in Europe first. Even in the 1970s, it really did seem that the social democratic model being pioneered in places like Scandinavia was the wave of the future. But Sweden doesn't seem like the future now. Instead, the avant-garde of political innovation is welfare state reform, privatization, and devolution. The cutting edge is probably to be found in reforms like charter schools, faith-based charities, and tax code simplification or in the minds of Third Way triangulators like Bill Clinton and Tony Blair.

History really did pivot with the stagflation of the 1970s and the subsequent elections of Margaret Thatcher in 1979 and Ronald Reagan in 1980. What seemed inevitable before then (Sweden) seemed obsolete afterwards. Moreover, secularism, which was on the march before the 1980s, no longer seems so militant. Faith-based public policy thinking is again on offense. The Reaganites and Thatcherites are not triumphant, but they have shifted the direction of debate, and destabilized the old arguments. And America, which has always been more free market and more religious, is now the nation with the head start.

The writers and politicians who seem up to date have absorbed the reality of the 1980s pivot. Bill Clinton and Tony Blair have tried to adapt their parties to the new direction. They are not dirigistes or secularists the way their predecessors were.

But most of the speakers at the Adelaide festival seem to be still fighting the elections of 1979 and 1980—and on the losing side. Perhaps the reason they have not absorbed the lessons of that revolution is that they never had any conservatives around to grapple with. They never had to confront conservative ideas face to face.

These people come from countries where there might be a few small conservative or free market think tanks, and maybe even a conservative magazine and a few brave columnists. But while center-right candidates may win elections, the conservative presence in the intellectual world is so small it can easily be scorned or ignored. The panelists there knew a bit about conservative ideas, but they know conservatism as some abstract menace that afflicts people elsewhere, like smallpox. An education professor named Mary Kalantzis attacked the "virulent nationalism" of American conservatives. That's just a cliché, which doesn't even come close to being an accurate description of the American right. The feminist Beatrix Campbell referred to the Institute for Economic Affairs, a London think tank, as "mad," hardly a sign that she has actually listened to them. Then she attacked conservatives for having a dark view of human nature. For example, she said, Francis Fukuyama has written a book called *The Great Disruption* arguing that men have a genetic disposition to oppress and brutalize each other. That's the exact opposite of what Fukuyama argues in the book. His point is that people have a predisposition to socialize and cooperate. These are the sorts of gross distortions you can only get away with if you are used to traveling in circles in which nobody knows any better.

At my various panels, well-meaning moderators kept introducing me in unintentionally patronizing tones. I was "a conservative who actually has a sense of humor," one said. "He's conservative, but I find I like him," another beamed. Nobody who actually knows any conservatives would ever talk this way.

American commentators, even on the left, don't talk that way (except maybe on some university campuses). American commentators not only know a bit more about conservative ideas, but they also know some actual conservatives. They've discovered that intelligent and good-hearted people hold conservative ideas. That's bound to have an effect on how they regard the body of thought. They've even absorbed a few conservative notions. A country that embraces an article called "Dan Quayle Was Right" is not closed-minded.

And for this we have at least two sets of people to thank. First, we need to thank the people who wrote the 501(c)(3) section of the tax code. Because donations to advocacy groups are deductible, conservatives were able to break the intellectual stranglehold of the academics. They were able to found think tanks and foundations that championed conservative ideas. (The importance of this reform is not to be underestimated. If I were made emperor of the world, the first change I would make would be to force all nations to make donations to non-profits tax deductible).

And second, we have Paul Weyrich to thank. He and his fellow pioneers built the institutions that thrust conservatives and conservative ideas into the American consciousness. If not for folks like them, our national debate would be like Australia's. World history really would be different. For all the occasional inanity of American public debate, it is cutting edge. The future may be ugly, but it's happening here. ♦

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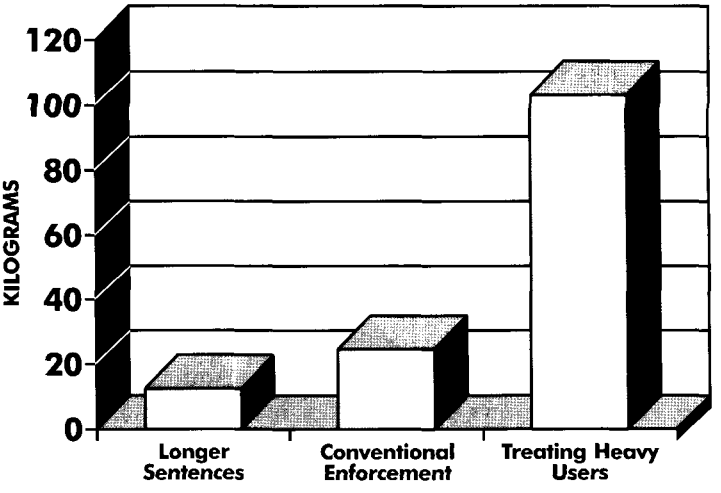
The RAND Corporation finds that drug treatment is more effective and far less costly than longer sentences or conventional enforcement!

The graph at right illustrates that treating heavy cocaine users could reduce consumption by 103 kilograms per extra million dollars.

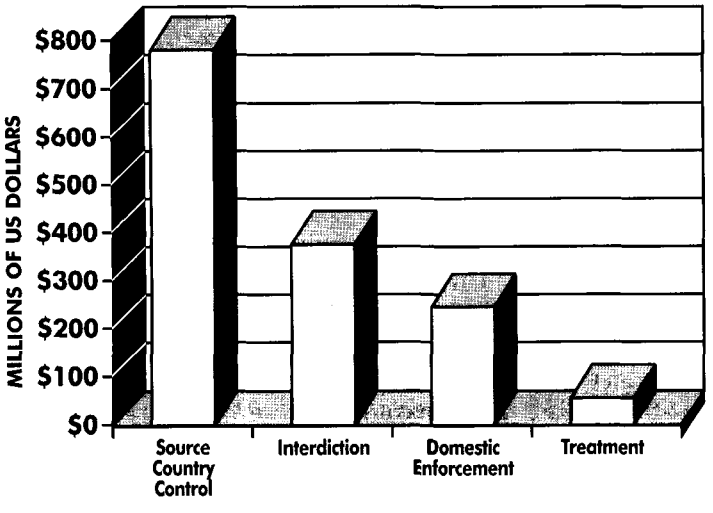
Additional treatment is 4 times more effective than adding law enforcement and 8 times more effective than increasing sentences in reducing cocaine use.

Source: *Throwing Away the Key or the Taxpayers' Money?* (1997), RAND Corp.

COCAINE CONSUMPTION PREVENTED PER ADDITIONAL MILLION DOLLARS SPENT



COST OF REDUCING COCAINE CONSUMPTION BY 1%



The graph compares the cost of reducing cocaine consumption by 1% nationally with 4 different strategies.

Because it actually reduces the demand for cocaine and the societal costs of drug use without requiring massive prison spending:

Added drug treatment is 15 times more effective than law enforcement at reducing the societal costs of cocaine use.

Source: *Controlling Cocaine: Supply Vs. Demand Programs.* (1994), RAND Corp.

Why aren't we investing in drug control strategies that really work?

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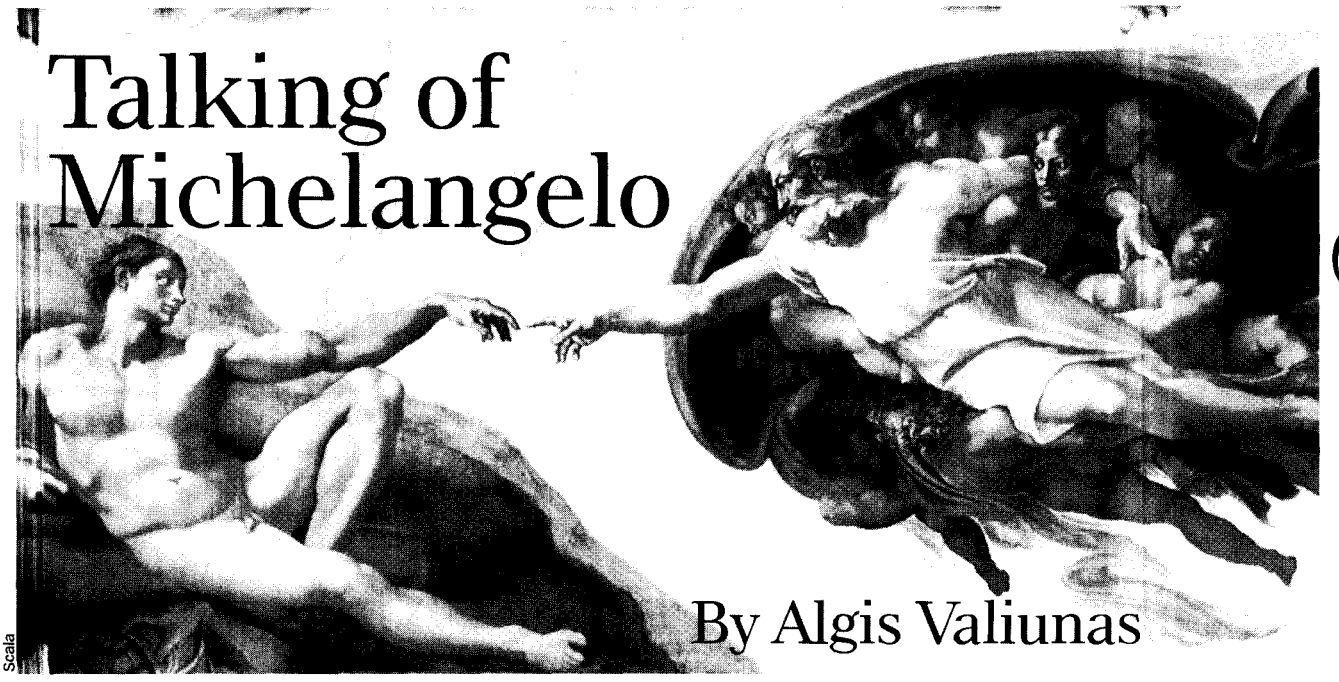
Talking of Michelangelo



Scala

By Algis Valiunas

Sculptor, painter, architect, and poet, Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564) is probably the most famous artist ever to live, and his most famous works all depict man as a beautiful creature made for great things and deserving to rejoice in his own majesty. The heroic male nude was Michelangelo's lifelong preoccupation: Its most celebrated expressions are his fourteen-foot-tall marble *David*, which occupied the most prominent place in Florence's Piazza della Signoria for over three hundred years before it was moved indoors to the Accademia, and his painting *Creation of Adam*, which is the showpiece of the Sistine Chapel ceiling frescoes in the Vatican. The sheer physical beauty of David and Adam is unsurpassed, so that one wonders if people looking at them today see anything more than ripped abdomens and peerless proportions.

For Michelangelo, however, the body's beauty is the way into the soul. Rippling sinew bespeaks spiritual force; the breadth of chest and the contour of hip sketch a human endowment that is far richer than flesh alone. The heroic demonstrates what is possible for man and displays the full extent of his reach. Beauty of this order makes demands on the beholder. Rainer Maria Rilke ends his poem on the *Belvedere Torso*—a mutilated but superb remnant of a male figure in marble from the first century—with the sternest yet most joyous of imperatives: "You must change your life." Rilke was exhorting his readers not to up the weight on their bench presses but to live nobly.

Algis Valiunas is a writer living in Florida.

Michelangelo, for his part, observed of the *Belvedere Torso*, "This is the work of a man who knew more than nature." Nature and antiquity were touchstones for Michelangelo. At least for a time, his supreme ambitions were to make something more beautiful than nature and to excel those artists of classical antiquity who showed it could be done.

JAMES BECK
Great and Good
Three Worlds of Michelangelo
Norton, 269 pp., $25.95

JOHN FREDERICK NIMS
The Complete Poems of Michelangelo
Univ. of Chicago Press, 208 pp., $25

From these ambitions emerged Michelangelo's most renowned works, which have come to embody the Renaissance. Reverence for and pleasure in the grandeur of man are Renaissance hallmarks. "Men can do all things if they will," declared Leon Battista Alberti, another Italian of many talents. Jacob Burckhardt's pathbreaking 1860 history, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, is an inspired elaboration of Alberti's motto. Burckhardt shows the multiform vitality of a time that elevated individual greatness—artistic, intellectual, military, political—above all else. Michelangelo, who seemed able to do anything he willed, was—alongside Leonardo da Vinci and Niccolò Machiavelli—as great a man as the Renaissance produced.

Greatness is often a far cry from goodness, but, according to a new biography, Michelangelo was as good as he was great. James Beck's *Three Worlds of Michelangelo* takes the artist up to age thirty-eight and the completion of the Sistine ceiling. A professor of art history at Columbia, Beck writes "A handful of individuals in the history of Western culture have evolved into universal symbols for the entire civilization. They are, in effect, the civilization."

In today's academic world, which has no place for great men, these are fighting words, and it takes audacity even for a tenured professor to write them. To suggest, in addition, that such achievements might be the work of a man who should be called civilized—that is, decent, humane, self-restrained, moral, good—is to invite contempt. Everyone, inside and outside academia, knows that men of genius are ruthless, irascible, unloving, and demonic. Michelangelo's own reputation places him among that crowd, as a prototype of the Romantic artist-hero. Beck has his work cut out for him as he tries to rehabilitate Michelangelo's character.

To his contemporaries, Michelangelo was known for his *terribilità*, an untranslatable word that refers to both the awesome splendor of his work and the monumental crankiness of his life. Beck

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agrees entirely that there is *terribilità* in abundance in Michelangelo's art, but he prefers to think that the man who made such works was utterly different from the works he made. His Michelangelo was a thoroughly good man: devoted to his father and brothers, tender and loyal to friends, generous to fellow artists, chaste even in the face of strong erotic temptations, homosexual or heterosexual or both. For the most part, Beck makes a convincing case; the *terribilità* business, however, does not go away so easily.

The incident that really made Michelangelo's name as a *terribile* was a set-to he had with Pope Julius II. The pope had commissioned Michelangelo to make him a tomb like nobody else's; the artist's design contained some forty full-size sculpted figures, and he was bold enough to assert that the tomb would be the most extraordinary work of art ever made. Making it, however, proved more difficult than drawing it. When Michelangelo returned to Rome after eight months in the marble quarries of Carrara, he went to the pope in order to be reimbursed for delivery of a shipment of stone; the pope left him cooling his heels for a week, until finally a guard told him that he had been ordered not to admit him. Michelangelo told the guard that if the pope ever wanted him, he should look elsewhere than in Rome; the next morning, Michelangelo headed back to Florence. Papal couriers overtook him on the way, and presented him with a letter from the pope ordering him back to Rome. Michelangelo refused to go. It would be six months before Michelangelo asked the pope to forgive his stalking off. The tomb was never completed in anything like the planned form.

Beck argues, not without cogency, that Michelangelo left Rome out of fear that Julius had lost interest in the tomb, which was true, and that his life was in danger, which was not true. However, Beck's contention that Michelangelo simply behaved like "a cautious, sensitive person worried about his security and his career" is too much to swallow. It is far more likely that fear and anger both played their part in this episode, as Giorgio Vasari, Michelangelo's sometime apprentice and his first biographer, remarked in *Lives of the Most Eminent Italian Architects, Painters, and Sculptors*. By all accounts but Beck's, Michelangelo was a hothead. Vasari related that when someone—possibly Pope Julius, in disguise—sneaked into the Sistine Chapel as Michelangelo was still working on the ceiling, the painter hurled planks from the scaffolding down at the intruder.

Scala

On another occasion, the pope impatiently demanded to know when Michelangelo would finish the ceiling, and Michelangelo impatiently responded, "When I can, Holy Father." Furious at this insolence, the pope struck Michelangelo with a staff, and told him he would make him finish the job soon enough; however, Vasari wrote, Julius presently thought better of his outburst, and sent an emissary to the artist with an apology and a handsome sum of money "to calm him down, as he was afraid that he would react in his usual unpredictable way." Michelangelo forgave the pope, with a genial laugh, but he was not always so forgiving.

Pope Paul III's master of ceremonies, Biagio da Cesena, observed of Michelangelo's nearly completed *Last Judgment* on the altar wall of the Sistine Chapel that, with its numerous nude figures, it would look better on the wall of a tavern or a bathhouse. Taking revenge as only an artist can, Michelangelo painted Biagio's face on the figure of Minos, Prince of Hell; a pair of ass's ears appear on the unfortunate churchman's head and a snake coiled about his legs clamps its mouth around his penis.

So Beck, who calls his book "an interpretation of the personality of Michelangelo," gets the proportions wrong in portraying his hero; his Michelangelo is positively swollen with goodness. Vasari, on the other hand, acknowledged his master's flaws and still honored him as the best of men: God "determined to give this artist the knowledge of true moral philosophy and the gift of poetic expression, so that everyone might admire and follow him as their perfect exemplar in life, work, behavior, and in every endeavor, and he would be acclaimed as divine."

Where the human and the divine meet in Michelangelo's art, both the glories and the limitations of the human condition are revealed. The *Creation of Adam* shows the recumbent man and the deity virtually in parallel, and it is plain that Adam is made in God's image; yet there can be no mistaking who is master here. God is both tender and fearsome; His extended, life-giving right arm is like a lightning bolt that strikes with the utmost delicacy. Adam is as yet mere inert matter—already beautiful but lacking vital force—about to receive a soul. One discerns the immeasurable distance between Creator and creature in so slight a detail as their hands, which do not quite touch. Adam's outstretched arm looks as powerful as God's own, but it is limp-wristed, and his fingers are diffidently curled. The tip of God's right index finger, by contrast, is the focus of a masterful energy that gathers strength in a long diagonal and is discharged in a commanding gesture: *Fiat homo*. It is a gesture that can destroy as well as create. One sees it in a subsequent panel on the ceiling, as the angel

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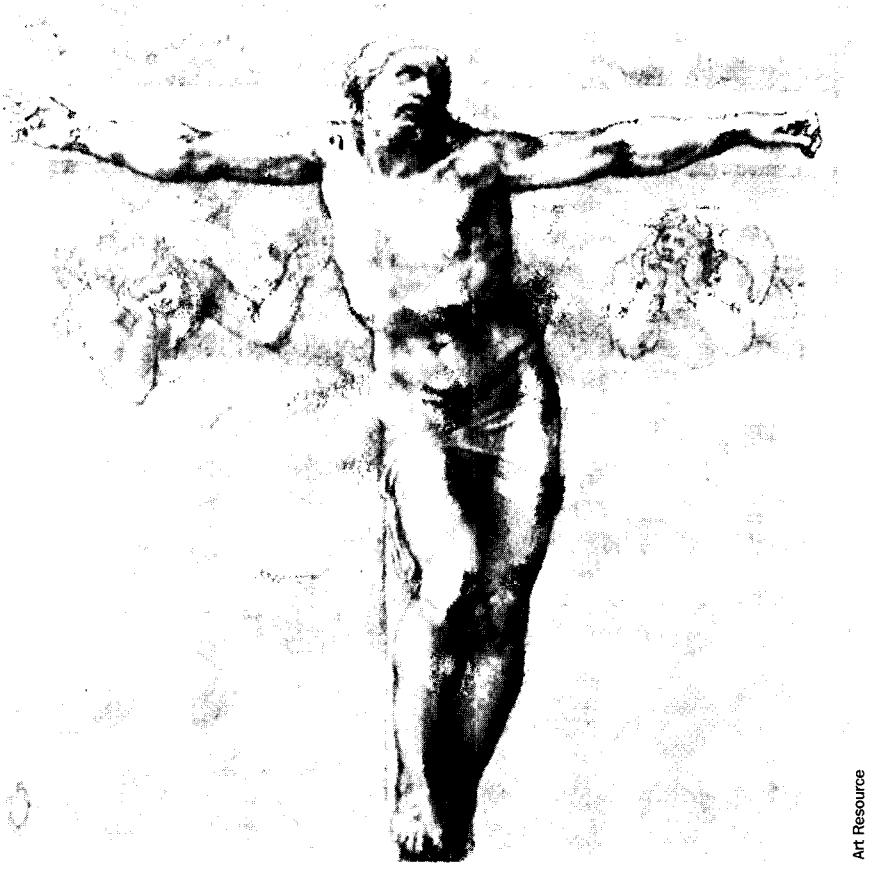
wielding a sword drives Adam and Eve from Paradise. Human magnificence owes everything to God, and, once that truth is forgotten, man is never far from coming to grief.

God, too, partakes of that grief. The drawing of the Crucifixion that Michelangelo did in 1539 for Vittoria Colonna, a saintly widow whom he loved with ardent purity and whom Burckhardt calls "the most famous woman of Italy," is the finest rendering of Christ on the Cross done during the Renaissance. Painted by Cimabue and Giotto and Grünewald, sculpted by Ghiberti and Donatello, Christ just hangs there, dead: The Resurrection may be coming, but for now there is only death—decorous and peaceful in Donatello's portrayal, gruesome beyond description in Grünewald's, but death in any event. Michelangelo's drawing, in which Christ is alive, depicts not only Christ's triumph over death but also the human struggle with life at its most frightful.



Art Resource

Above: The Crucifixion drawn for Vittoria Colonna. Opposite: Detail from the Last Judgment.

Michelangelo's Christ is tortured and haggard, but he is, nevertheless, unbroken. Brawnier than David, he looks as though he could wrench himself free of the nails. He twists his suffering body to relieve the terrible weight, yet he remains the image of heroic endurance. He casts his eyes toward heaven in agonized supplication, as a man, but in certainty of ultimate victory, as God. Most Renaissance crucifixions emphasize the defeated humanity of Christ, and leave his triumphant divinity to the viewer's pious imagination; Michelangelo's Christ suggests the promise of salvation, but also demonstrates the virtue most necessary for men as they struggle to be saved: fortitude. All men are to be strengthened by Christ's display of human strength. This Crucifixion is Michelangelo's subtlest heroic portrait: Human magnificence, exemplified by God become man, consists of the divine life good men will enjoy after death and the ability to endure the worst earthly trials undefeated.

Yet Michelangelo could not escape the fear that even heroic strength may not be enough; that fear is evident in the sculptures of the dead Christ that he carved in the 1540s and 1550s: the *Florentine Pietà* and the *Palestrina Pietà*. These are as different as can be from the signature piece that he made in his youth. In that early *Pietà*, Mary holds the dead Christ on her lap almost without effort; the effect is of an unearthly serenity.

In the *Florentine Pietà*, three people—the Virgin seated, Mary Magdelene kneeling, and Nicodemus standing—labor with all their might to keep the broken body of Christ from falling to the ground. A long, arcing, inexorably descending line runs from Christ's neck along his torso and thigh; his left arm plunges straight down from the shoulder; Mary's thigh and Christ's lower leg form a diagonal aimed sharply toward the earth. No human strength can long resist this downward pull; no human burden is heavier than that which man bears for having put God to death. In the *Florentine Pietà*, the holiest of human beings are on the verge of collapsing under the weight of human sinfulness. What, then, about the sinner? Not necessarily the wicked, but the good man with the usual failings—what must he feel?

The answer is to be found in Michelangelo's poems. His poems can be so gnarled and knotty that even Italian editions provide paraphrases for the reader's benefit. Poets as great as Wordsworth and Rilke have undertaken translations and given up. One is especially grateful then that John Frederick Nims, the author of eight books of poetry, former editor of the renowned magazine *Poetry*, who recently died at age eighty-five, saw the project of translating Michelangelo through to the end. In some 300 poems, mostly sonnets and madrigals, about 250 of them written during the last thirty years of his life, Michelangelo explored many aspects of the human condition, but always returned to what he considered its most significant feature: man's distance from God.

Much of Michelangelo's poetry can be characterized as thoughtfully erotic. Love, profane and sacred, is the predominant theme; passion provokes reflections on what sort of beings we are that we should have such feelings. Many of the poems are addressed to the handsome and brilliant Roman nobleman Tommaso de' Cavalieri, whom Michelangelo met in 1532, when he was fifty-seven and Cavalieri twenty-three. Others are addressed to Vittoria Colonna, and some to an unknown "lady beautiful and cruel." There are flashes of exuberant carnality, as in his aching to hold *my long desired sweet lord, / in my unworthy but eager*

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arms, for ever. There are moments of disenchantment and even disgust with sensual pleasure, *its core of ash and gall*. There are intimations of love that transcends the strictly personal and lifts one heavenward: *Drawn to each lovely thing, my doting eyes. / Drawn to its heavenly destiny, my soul. / Both with the one same goal, / no way, but in treasuring loveliness, to rise.*

But, ultimately, all those lovely things get in the way of the poet's deepest longing, which is for God. In these poems, the greatest artist of the human body finds himself wishing he were not encumbered by a body of his own. Reminding one of John Donne's sonnet "Batter my heart, threeperson'd God," Michelangelo's sonnet "I wish I'd want what I don't want, Lord, at all" shows the poet's desire that God's love transform him into the kind of man who loves God as he should, without distraction or compromise.

Even art comes to seem a distraction, perhaps one fatal to the soul: *Painting and sculpture soothe the soul no more, / its focus fixed on the love divine, outstretching / on the Cross, to enfold us closer, open arms.* Life is short, and art is long; but eternity is a great deal longer, especially if you happen to be damned.

Michelangelo's own severity might seem unconscionable, miserable, or even mad; and one is relieved to find that Michelangelo continued to work on his sculpture almost to the last day of his long life. Still, the truth remains that one of the most remarkable of men found human magnificence simply not enough.

Jacob Burckhardt writes of the atrophy of religious feeling among the "intellectual giants" of the Renaissance: "The need of salvation thus becomes felt more and more dimly, while the ambitions and the intellectual activity of the present either shut out altogether every thought of a world to come, or else caused it to assume a poetic instead of a dogmatic form." Of Michelangelo, precisely the opposite was true. In this crucial respect, he was not a man of his time and place, but rather discovered in himself a need common to men of every time and place. And the answer to his need made even the *David* seem a slight thing. ♦

PREMATURE BURIAL

The Nineteenth-Century Death of God

By Preston Jones

Maybe you didn't know that "what we would call 'S and M' was highly popular among the Victorians." In that case, you should read A.N. Wilson, "award-winning novelist, biographer, and journalist," who in his new volume *God's Funeral*, devotes some twenty-five pages to musing about the life, work, and influence of Algernon Charles Swinburne. The "surviving pornography" of Swinburne "is extensive," Wilson explains, "with many a loving description of boys begging for mercy as blood spurts from the weals on their buttocks and cruel tutors or insatiable dominatrixes continue to thwack away."

W.W. Norton

A.N. WILSON
God's Funeral
W.W. Norton, 402 pp., $27.95

You might wonder just what Swinburne's love affair with the lash has to do with atheism and the rise of unbelief in the nineteenth century—the actual subject of *God's Funeral*. Wilson's answer isn't clear. Indeed, his extended quotations from Swinburne—"Oh, hold his shirt up, Algernon," "Oh, doesn't the pain make him cry"—stand as figures for what's the first problem with Wilson's book: rambling, unfocused, and (dare one say, in the context of Swinburne) undisciplined structure.

Just when it seems that Wilson is finally ready to make a germane comment, he notes, "incidentally," that Swinburne's tutor "was the much-loved William Johnson, perhaps one of the most inspired and inspiring of all Victorian schoolmasters"—and thus is the reader led off on yet another of the digressions that compose perhaps 70 percent of the book.

In its British incarnation *God's Funeral* is subtitled *The Decline of Faith in Western Civilization*. The American edition bears no subtitle at all, and one suspects that is so for at least two reasons. First, the book focuses mostly on England, has little to say about the United States, and even less to say about such major European figures as Nietzsche. Second, the book isn't really about the decline of religious faith in the nineteenth century. True, Wilson pretends that this is his subject (and his reviewers have been happy to play along), and he does bring it up from time to time. He even alludes to something he calls "the central theme of this book." And, yes, Marx, Darwin, George Eliot, Carlyle, William James, Matthew Arnold, and Freud make predictable appearances, though the last is allotted less than five pages.

But so unfocused, superficially researched, and weakly argued is this book (Wilson's hollow endnotes speak for themselves), the best that can be said for it is that it's a collection of somewhat related, derivative reflections on the nineteenth century in Britain.

And yet, this isn't to say that *God's Funeral* is about nothing at all. In fact,

Preston Jones recently completed a doctoral dissertation on the Bible in late nineteenth-century Canadian public life.

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it's about a lot of things. For one, it's about A.N. Wilson's contempt for ordinary religious people. He calls charismatic Christians "simple Bible ranters" and likens evangelicals to "ayatollahs." John Henry Cardinal Newman, whom Wilson thinks was homosexual and whom he calls a "bigot" at least four times, committed, in Wilson's words, "the sin against the Intellect" by holding to Christian faith.

On display as well is the arrogance of a supposedly solemn writer who talks down to his readers with stunning condescension: "The late twentieth-century reader will find . . ."; "To the ears of any reasonably sensitive twentieth-century observer . . ." Wilson also has an unenviable capacity for generalization: "The enormous commercial success in our day of 'popular science' books," he writes, "might be attributable to the profound interest and enjoyment which we all derived from the study of science in our childhood." Ah.

Finally, the book is about revealing the strongly asserted but completely unargued opinions of the critic who wrote it: "It would be a foolish person . . . who did not see that *Beata Beatrix* . . . was one of the greatest works of art of the entire nineteenth century." A few pages after telling us about Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "uncanny" resemblance to Luciano Pavarotti, Wilson proves himself an even worse philosopher than a critic, gravely assuring us that it is "existence itself which is surely the greatest of all mysteries."

It's unfortunate that A.N. Wilson, fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, has written such a bad book. Thomas Hardy wrote the poem from which Wilson takes his title, and we have a real need for a modern, intellectually serious, well-researched, psychologically compelling account of how nineteenth century unbelievers answered Hardy's question of "who or what shall fill" the dead God's place. But seriousness—even the seriousness of atheism—is what Wilson seems to lack.

This failure to be serious, to discipline himself toward making an argument rather than striking a pose, was building through Wilson's recent books on Jesus and St. Paul. A widely published and respected Biblical scholar once explained to me that New Testament scholars treat Wilson as worthy of response only to the extent that the general public mistakenly thinks of his books as representing legitimate scholarship. Victorian scholars will say the same of *God's Funeral*.

The truth is that were Wilson not the author of numerous books produced by respected publishers, his efforts wouldn't merit notice. But his books do keep getting published and the public keeps turning up at his events. And so the man—like the opinionated old wreck holding forth boorish hour after boorish hour at a dinner party—is able to imagine himself making a real contribution to the English-speaking world's intellectual life and letters. ♦

THE SLANG OF PRIGS

Correct English Usage

By Joseph Epstein

George Eliot—of all people!—once called correct English "the slang of the prigs." I happen to be one of those prigs, who not merely slings that slang on every possible occasion but takes a certain quiet but smug pride in using such words as "decimate" and "transpire" with sweet precision. I treat the word "than" as a conjunction and not a preposition, and so say "They are less correct than we" instead of "less correct than us." I have a strong distaste for the adjective "prestigious" and will go to great lengths to avoid it. I never use "presently" as synonymous with currently. I worry about these things, in my own writing and speech and note mistakes in those of others. Being a prig, as I hope you are beginning to gather, is no easy job: The pay is low, the appreciation is non-existent, and there is scarcely any time off whatsoever.

WILSON FOLLETT and ERIK WENSBERG
Modern American Usage
A Guide
Hill & Wang, 384 pp., $25

BRYAN A. GARNER
A Dictionary of Modern American Usage
Oxford University Press, 752 pp., $35

As language prigs go, I am not quite so rabid as the man who corrected the English of an acquaintance of mine while he was delivering a wedding toast. Still, between the linguistic populists, who feel that all change in language is good and in any case natural and therefore inevitable, and the traditionalists, who view most change as under suspicion and hence worth arguing about, I am staunchly in the camp of the traditionalists. The language traditionalist prefers words to have settled into all but nearly unalterable meanings, locked in a pretty and permanent precision, even though he knows that change—endless, relentless, remorseless change—is in the nature of language. The problem is that, just now, most of the change in language seems so clearly for the worse.

How I myself became a traditionalist is a bit less than clear to me. I was not brought up in a home where the purest English was spoken, though my parents, neither of whom went to college, made it through life without the crutches of jargon or psychobabble, and the word "lifestyle" (used today, I am delighted to report, as a brand name for condoms) never passed their lips. As a student, I discovered that many of the twentieth-century prose styles I most admired—T.S. Eliot's, Evelyn Waugh's, Edmund Wilson's—achieved an extra boost from the assured correctness of their English:

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Fowler on **split infinitives.** *The English-speaking world may be divided into (1) those who neither know nor care what a split infinitive is; (2) those who do not know, but care very much; (3) those who know and condemn; (4) those who know and approve; & (5) those who know and distinguish.*
—H.W. Fowler, *Modern English Usage (1926)*

Correctness lent logic and precision, which in turn lent solidity and authority, which, cumulatively, ended in elegance of what I took to be a virile kind.

I cannot vouch for the aerobic benefits to be derived from taking up the traditionalist position, but it can leave one in a condition of nearly perpetual agitation. A recent morning's gutter press—I refer, of course, to the *New York Times*—contains a piece about a play on the relationship between Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas in which the writer remarks that the friendship between the two women was "sensual, tempestuous, supremely enabling." Why can't my eyes glide gently past the phrase "supremely enabling" without my sighing and thinking that, were I Commissar of Culture, its author would be put to an excruciatingly slow death in which high voltage fingernail removers and thick, lubricious snakes would play a significant part?

At the heart of all disputes about language is the matter of authority. In the end, "Says Who?" remains a key question. In a now bygone day, one might have said, *Webster's* says, or the *Oxford English Dictionary* says. I often used to say—and still sometimes do say—H.W. Fowler, author of *Modern English Usage*, says. But dictionaries have lost their old confidence, and now tend to be, in the language of the trade, descriptive rather than prescriptive: content, that is, merely to describe how a word is used rather than to prescribe how it ought to be used. Vox freakin' Populi!

Perhaps the saddest surrender in recent years was the appearance, in 1996, of *The New Fowler's Modern English Usage* written by R.W. Burchfield. This edition, along with being largely descriptive in spirit, took the occasion to fire a number of shots at its predecessor and, almost everywhere sending up the white flag on prescriptive lexicography, turned out to be not *The New Fowler* but *The Un-Fowler*.

The great Henry Fowler was of course thoroughly English, and it is an indication of the past cultural supremacy of the English that, despite the many differences in pronunciation, spelling, grammar, and usage between British and American English, more people interested in these matters turned to Fowler's *Modern English Usage* than to its American counterpart, Wilson Follett's *Modern American Usage*, a book that was first published in 1966, forty years after Fowler's volume appeared. Follett died before his book was completed. Useful though it is, *Modern American Usage* wanted the elements of oddity, idiosyncrasy, authority, and character that made *Modern English Usage* a great and, I would say, enduring book.

Usage, which includes the realms of correct grammar and precise use of words, was always thought by Americans to be the preserve of the English. The language itself, after all, was called English, not American, and Englishmen prided themselves on using the language better than we. But the cultural supremacy of the English is now—poof!—all but gone, perhaps illustrating the sad truth that cultural power dissipates in the wake of lost political power. Today the English probably use the language as coarsely as do most Americans: English social science and journalism seem of a shoddy piece with ours, which may be why so many English men and women are able to edit American magazines and newspapers without noticeably raising their quality.

As a nostalgic Anglophile, I find I no longer yearn to avail myself of British words and phrasing I once much admired. I have long ago given up on "early on," chiefly because it has been much overused by my fellow colonists. I used to enjoy saying "put paid to," but do so no longer. I am saving for my old age the phrase "this will see me out," so useful when buying what one feels will be one's final overcoat, car, or any other item that one probably won't require repurchasing before meeting the Ugly Customer (as William Hazlitt called Death). I have never had much use for "in the event," the English stand-in for "as it happens." Every so often I read a sentence with an English touch that seems to me more elegant than an American might write: "True, there is Pompey's Pillar," the English Egyptologist John Ray writes, "which is nothing to do with Pompey but is not bad as pillars go." American English would call for "*has* nothing to do," which seems to me, for

Fowler on **vogue words.** *Every now and then a word emerges from obscurity, or even from nothingness or a merely and not actual existence, into sudden popularity. It is often, but not necessarily, one by that no means explains itself to the average man, who has to find out its meaning as best he can; his wrestlings with it have usually some effect upon it; it does not mean quite what it ought to, but in compensation it means some things that it ought not to, before he has done with it.*

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reasons I cannot quite comprehend, less good. But for the most part I do not think the English any longer manipulate the language better than we do, which is a shame.

The Internet is beginning to look as if it may be an enemy of careful English. Something there is about language that appears on a computer screen that divests it of the responsibility to be in any way stylish, let alone correct. Things written to be read on the screen, somehow, haven't the same weight, density, gravity of things written on the page. The computer screen speaks to impermanence—hit that delete button and it's gone—and impermanence releases one from the obligation to get things exactly right. Expending style for computer readers seems a bit, perhaps more than a bit, beside the point. People who go to computers for their information are, if anything, likely to be put off by style: They want just the facts, ma'am. I was once asked to write for a large Internet company at a decently high fee, but I found I had no appetite for it. I am no content-provider (a heartbreakingly unhappy phrase) but a writer. And I write to be printed on paper—the thin newsprint of the daily press, the clay-covered stock of the slick weekly magazines, the heavy rag of the quarterly journals, the acid-free pages of books, but *paper* only, not for a screen, where what I write can be so readily deleted, trashed, scorched into nonexistence.

A key element in usage is a serious concern about felicitous distinctions. It is at this point that style connects with usage. If one does not care about the different shades of meaning between *sensual* and *sensuous*, *jealousy* and *envy*, *fewer* and *lesser*, *further* and *farther*, *permit* and *allow*, *congruent* and *congruous*, *among* and *between*, *eager* and *anxious*, *brutal* and *cruel*, one probably doesn't care much about style either. Without an interest in usage one probably cannot appreciate, because unlikely to apprehend, style, of which correctness and precision are crucial parts.

One of the few ways I have of checking on the quality of books of modern usage is to see where they stand on those issues, questions, and problems on which I am myself so touchy. The more intelligent books, you will perhaps be less than astonished to learn, tend overwhelmingly to be those that agree with me; and the really good ones extend my knowledge on many points.

Two new books of American usage have recently been published, one a serious revision of Wilson Follett's *Modern American Usage* by Erik Wensberg, the other *A Dictionary of Modern American Usage* by Bryan A. Garner. Wensberg is a Manhattan man-of-all-work editor, Garner is a lawyer and lexicographer who has previously specialized in legal texts.

The Garner volume is nearly twice the length of the Wensberg, but the latter, owing to the rather short fuse of Wensberg's temper, provides more in the way of colorful fireworks. Wensberg's tone is that of a man impatient, slightly ticked, sometimes appalled at the oafishness of his fellow Americans. Garner, a lawyer by training, is more evenhanded; he also seems to suggest that all is not lost, if only people use a bit better sense. Sometimes, though, he strikes the quick peremptory note I like in reference works: "illusory; illusive. The former is preferred." Case closed.

Here are the first two of Wensberg's five sentences on the distinction between "cynical" and "skeptical": "We might as well interchange murder and surgery as mix up these two descriptives. They have strayed far from their sources in Greek philosophy, but in modern use neither is replaceable by the other." The calmer Garner on the distinction between "anticipate" and "expect" reports that the first means to take care of or preclude by prior action, or greatly to look forward to, and adds that the two terms have mistakenly come to be used interchangeably owing to slipshod extension, and finally advises: "generally avoid anticipate when it's merely equivalent to expect."

Wensberg nicely formulates the importance of adding to the stock of distinction in language: "Almost always, the move toward a distinction, the positive work of mind on language, is a gain. The negative change, away from distinct ideas, is generally the result of heedlessness or ignorance, and hence a loss." Wensberg and I are in agreement in finding the word "societal" ugly. He lists compounds formed with "driven," as in "policy-driven," as among his "forbidden words"; nicely knocks off the word "arguable" by writing, "Although several centuries old, this word is flighty and should be left to its wayward ways"; and sticks a nice pin in "prestigious" by reminding his readers that "fifty years ago [it] still described juggling, sleight-of-hand, or cheating, as in *prestidigitation*."

Fowler on **elegant variation.** *It is the second-rate writers, those intent rather on expressing themselves prettily than on conveying their meaning clearly, and still more those whose notions of style are based on a few misleading rules of thumb, that are chiefly open to allurements of elegant variation.*

No book of usage can be complete, but it is a pity that neither Wensberg nor Garner has an entry on the dopey usage of "literate" to mean well-read or even literary, as in "He's a highly literate fellow." Better, in my view, to leave "literate" in its pristine and perfectly sensible meaning of able to read and write. Garner has nothing on "academia," which Wensberg lays into as a piece of pure pretension, though he doesn't touch on the student crudity that speaks of doing well in "one's academics." Garner is good at knocking down those two silliest of academic locutions, "as it were" and "if you will," while Wensberg does a nice punch-out on "dysfunctional." The many meanings of the word "attitude"—as in "That's a jacket with attitude"—go unremarked by both lexicographers. New word though it may be, "attitude" has

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Fowler on **slipshod extension.** *Slipshod extension is especially likely to occur when some accident gives currency among the uneducated to words of learned origin....[The man using slipshod extension] perhaps notices now & then that people look at him quizzically as if he were not quite intelligible, but this happens seldom enough to let him put it down to their ignorance of the best modern idiom.*

already acquired too many blurry meanings to have a long life in the lingo Americano. "You cannot have a clear language without clear terms," wrote Tocqueville in his chapter on the American use of language, adding that "in matters of language democracies prefer obscurity to hard work."

Sometimes a word that begins life in quite hateful fashion takes on, after several odd twists, amusing new meanings. I was a strong campaigner against what I used to call "the flying *whatever*," or the use of "whatever" as an even weaker substitute for *et cetera*, as in "I find you beautiful, intelligent, whatever," or "I may go to law school, do an MBA, whatever." Pretty stupid stuff. Then I began to notice subtle inflections behind the word, which suggested that it was being used, fairly effectively, as a quieter, subtler version of "screw," "bug," or (an English twist here) "sod" off, especially as a nicely sour rejoinder to being offered advice one doesn't want to hear. "Whatever!" one says, usually walking away.

"No problem," on the other hand, has become an enormous problem. "Thank you," one says. "No problem" is increasingly the rejoinder. "You're welcome" is in danger of departing the language. The other day I called an attorney, who, I was told, was in a meeting. I said I would call back later. "No problem," his secretary said. No problem for whom, I thought: her, me, the attorney? No problem—often "Hey, no problem," sometimes "No prob," not yet but perhaps soon "N.P."—doesn't seem to me to work anywhere near as well as does the Italian *prego*, which can mean "please," "thank you," "excuse me," "not at all," and "all right," and has the further virtue of ending with a vowel.

"Fun" as an adjective—as in "fun time," "fun person," "fun place"—gets no mention from Wensberg, though one would have thought it would cause him to break out in hives. Garner mentions it with mild disdain, quotes some egregious examples, and closes by saying that "To traditionalists, these forms remain blemishes in writing and speech alike. They are distinctly non-U," by which he means favored by the uneducated classes, though my own sense is that those who have been to college use "fun" in this way quite as much as anyone else. This new usage shall always remain memorable to me because a few years ago, coming out of a restaurant that attempted to supply a 1950s atmosphere, a woman I was with, who is perhaps a mite meticulous about food and language both, remarked: "We must never come here again. It is a place, I fear, for fun couples."

"Words are born and die," wrote the linguistically scrupulous Ronald Knox in *Enthusiasm*, "they live only so long as they have an important errand to fulfill, by expressing what needs expression." Necessity provides the true test. Thus nearly every dopey phrase from the 1960s—"doing my thing," "not my bag," "right on"—has been neatly wiped off the linguistic map, leaving only the estimable "rip-off." "Rip-off" may be assured a continued life if only because it seems to be needed to describe the 1960s. The loss of the word "disinterested," now most often used as a synonym for "uninterested," suggests that the majestic quality of disinterest itself is no longer an important part of contemporary culture.

The line that is most difficult to walk in usage is that between good sense and pedantry. Even the greatest of writers can go off the rails by becoming too greatly precisian. James Boswell reports that Samuel Johnson used to find "fault with me for using the phrase to *make* money. 'Don't you see (said he) the impropriety of it? To *make* money is to *coin* it: You should say *get* money.'" That seems to me stepping over the line. Yet Johnson was right in being indignant about the sloppy use of "idea" when only a notion or an opinion was what was being talked about. I myself get nicely worked up when people misuse "issue," as in "She has issues with her parents over that." "Problems," my dear knucklehead, the word you want is "problems."

"Sometimes," Wittgenstein says, "an expression has to be withdrawn from language and sent for cleaning—then it can be put back into circulation." Wensberg and Garner offer a number of fine candidates, among them *bottom line*, *viable*, *scenario*, *synergy*, *no-brainer*, *proactive*, *hands-on*, *window of opportunity*, *dialogue*, *defining moment*, *hidden agenda*, and many more. I would add *values*, *icon*, *intriguing* (where *interesting* or *fascinating* is meant) and *process*, and should like to see *focus*, currently the deadest metaphor in the language, sent to Wittgenstein's cleaners and not picked up till sometime around 2050.

One of the great usage questions of our day has to do with the language of what, depending on one's own politics, one would call either sexism or political correctness: sexism if one is of the left, political correctness if one is of the right. ("Political correctness" is on the list of Bryan Garner's "Vogue Words"; it wouldn't be on mine, because I think it continues to describe something that really does exist.) The old word "gender," once confined to a grammatical context, is greatly overused, but Erik Wensberg makes a good case for it in certain connections, citing the sentence "What determined promotion at our place wasn't skill but sex," which suggests something rather radically different than what may have been intended.

Where things become nervous-making for many people is in the choice of

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the gender of singular pronouns that must be made to agree with their antecedents. By now all but the most psychotic of feminists and craven of feminist fellow-travelers have given up on *his/her*, *s/he*, *s/he/it*, *heesh*, *hizer*, and the rest of these loony tune words; even they, unaesthetic souls that they are, have had to recognize the comic absurdity of such constructions. (Some absurdities, such as chair for chairman or chairwoman, seem, for the moment, to have won acceptance, at least in universities.) Others, wishing to score points simultaneously for both being on the right side and providing a surprise, will—sly dogs—write such things as "Every economist knows that she . . ." or "No boxer in her right mind would. . . ." I know an academic writer who did this sort of thing a fair amount and ended up having a sex-change operation. Did he suffer, after years of playing this game, one wonders, grave gender confusion?

In his entry on sexism, Bryan Garner takes what is probably the safest position now available on these matters. He points out the silliness of such constructions as "womyn" and "herstory." He allows that "as a non-sexist suffix, *-person* leaves much to be desired," though he doesn't seem to mind "chair," "ombuds," and other emasculations. He thinks it time to kiss off *-ess* endings (poetess, authoress, etc.) and I am in general agreement with him here—Jewess has for me, a touchy member of the tribe, always carried an extra large dollop of unpleasantness. I myself, though, should hate to lose the charming word "aviatrix."

Garner holds that one should strive for "a style that doesn't even hint at the issue"—a style that, "on the one hand, no reasonable person could call sexist, and on the other hand, never suggests you're contorting your language to be non-sexist." That is a sensible enough formulation, and yet I prefer Erik Wensberg, who seems to be bored with all this fiddle and who ends a lengthy discussion of the matter of pronouns and their antecedents by asserting:

> Those who believe that by changing an English idiom they change women's lot will go on asserting that the figurative *he* is no longer figurative and is no longer to be used. Those who think that changing English idiom is a long way around to a good social end will use common sense and give words in a sentence due weight as before.

For myself, I happen to resent what I think the totalitarian tendency of the politically correct police and feel it remains worth fighting against. With P. D. James, I think they constitute "a kind of linguistic fascism," whose "promoters wish to dictate not only what we say but what we think." P. D. James thinks that, in England, they have happily been able "to kill off its worst manifestations by humor and ridicule." In America we have not had the same good luck, for humor and ridicule here doesn't seem to work—or at least it hasn't thus far—as an antidote on the deeply humorless and ridiculous.

Erik Wensberg thinks that "the worst enemy of modern languages is the universal desire to show off" through the use of pretentious jargon, so that a simple meeting place becomes a *venue* or the chairman of a meeting becomes a *facilitator*.

No doubt there's a lot of this going around just now; it sometimes seems pandemic, which is to say, all over the joint. Most of it, though, is very thin in its pretensions; favored by physicians, airline pilots, and above all lower-echelon bureaucrats though it is, it does not seem to me as corrupting as the squishy, gauze-over-the-lens language of which the following—not long ago spoken by the president of the Juilliard School of Music about his program for general education for his students—is a fairly standard example:

> I wanted a different feel. I wanted a place as wonderfully rigorous as it has always been in the values and standards of the profession, but I also wanted an atmosphere that was constructive and welcoming, in which it was safe to take chances and form a very precise focus within a holistic approach.

What appalls here is that I agree with everything this man says; I would only argue against his right to say it this way.

If people who lead elite cultural institutions talk like therapists in brothels, are things better elsewhere? Not in politics, certainly, where Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the only senator in decades to use language as if there were some element of choice entailed, will soon be gone from public life. We haven't had a president with a distinctive style since Harry S. Truman; the rest have been ventriloquist's dummies, uttering the less-than-impressive words of hired helpers. Elsewhere in public life—entertainment, journalism, academic life—one chiefly encounters mere dreary articulation. No profession, social class, or group is notable for using language with the care—let us not speak of the flair—it deserves. The best one can hope is to find those rare but still extant human oases, isolated men and women who understand the deep delight possible in words and therefore attempt to use them with skill.

In an appendix to *Modern American Usage*, Eric Wensberg notes that "fatalism about language cannot be the philosophy of those who care about language." Doubtless he is right. Yet fatalism may be part of the attraction. The *New York Times* of July 13, carried the obituary of a senior editor of the *Christian Science Monitor* named Earl W. Foell, of whom, in the obit's first paragraph, it is said that he had "a romantic attachment to precision and clarity." This Mr. Foell, it seems, "was obsessed with comprehensibility." Strange obsession for an editor, to want his readers to understand what his writers are saying. Far out—perhaps a touch or two farther out than one may have expected. As Kingsley Amis, who could himself be quite maniacal about language, used to say, "There's no stopping regress." Yet there can be no more amusing work than to try. ♦

Fowler on **meticulous.** *What is the strange charm that makes this wicked word irresistible to the British journalist? does he like its length? does he pity its isolation?*

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Parody

Just before an Al Gore photo-op, local officials release 97 million gallons of water into the Connecticut River to raise the water level for his canoe.

—News item

U.S. Border Patrol Releases Flood of Immigrants Just Before Buchanan Photo-op

By JEFF GERTH and JAMES RISEN

WASHINGTON, August 14 — Patrick J. Buchanan's presidential campaign was thrown into turmoil today after it was learned that agents from the United States Border Patrol released 97,000 illegal immigrants into this country four hours before a Buchanan for President rally in the south Texas border town of Swillbucket.

The revelations taint what had been the most spectacular event of the entire campaign. Last Wednesday, as Mr. Buchanan was in the midst of a fiery campaign speech on the need to protect American jobs, his rally was interrupted by a stampede of tens of thousands of illegal immigrants heading north, screaming, "We Want Your Daughters!" as they passed. As if on cue, Mr. Buchanan turned to the cameras and declared, "Do you see what's happening, my friends! This is George W. Bush's America!"

The scene was replayed on television news programs across the nation, but immediately some sensed that the event might have been staged, pointing to the fact that 16,000 of the illegals had been issued T-shirts which read, "Yo Quiero Compassionate Conservatism!" Others noticed that the "Guatemalan" leading the stampede was actually Samuel Francis in a sombrero. Mr. Francis, a sometime columnist, is a colleague of Mr. Buchanan's.

After initially denying any illegal-immigrant release, the Border Patrol insisted that this was just a normal release of the sort that is conducted at the behest of the National Restaurant Association at least six times a year. "This was standard operating procedure. It was not done merely to enhance Pat's photo-op," declared Joseph Sobran, newly appointed head of the Shaftsbury County Border Patrol.

Other campaigns, however, were quick to seize on the controversy. The Forbes campaign sent down a fleet of air-conditioned buses to see if any of the new immigrants would be interested in attending the Iowa

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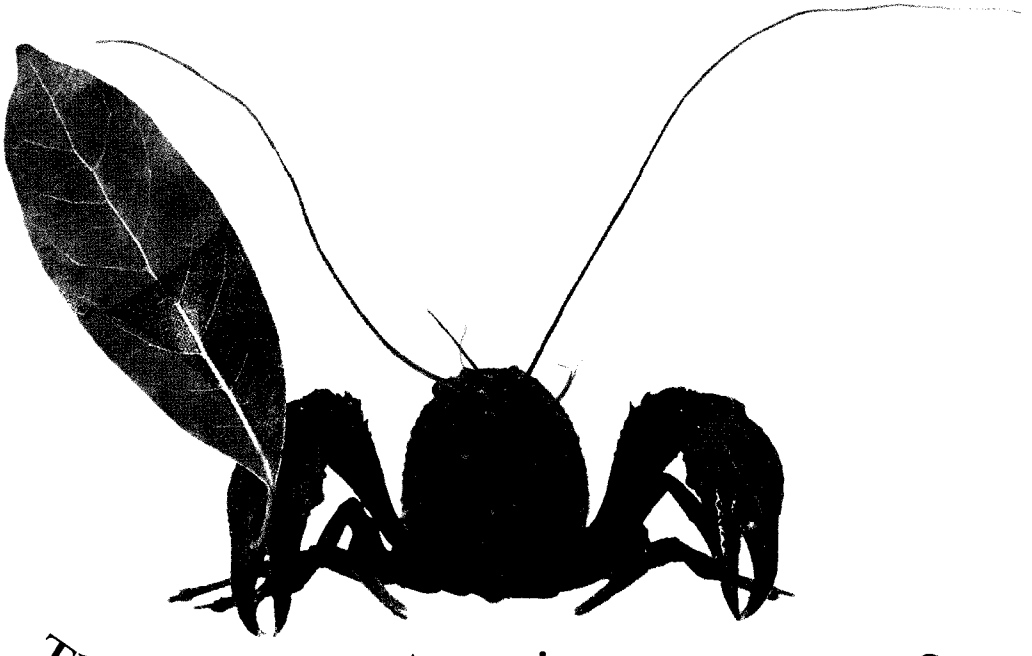
"More than 200 years ago, French-speaking settlers were forced to leave their land of Acadie, which the British had taken over and renamed Nova Scotia, and make their way to the wetlands of southern Louisiana. Here, without much notice, they built steep-roofed houses to slough off nonexistent snow and **adapted French cuisine to the crawfish** and muskrat they found in abundance in the pelican-tended swamps." – *The Almanac of American Politics 2000* on Louisiana's Congressional District 7.



The Almanac of American Politics 2000

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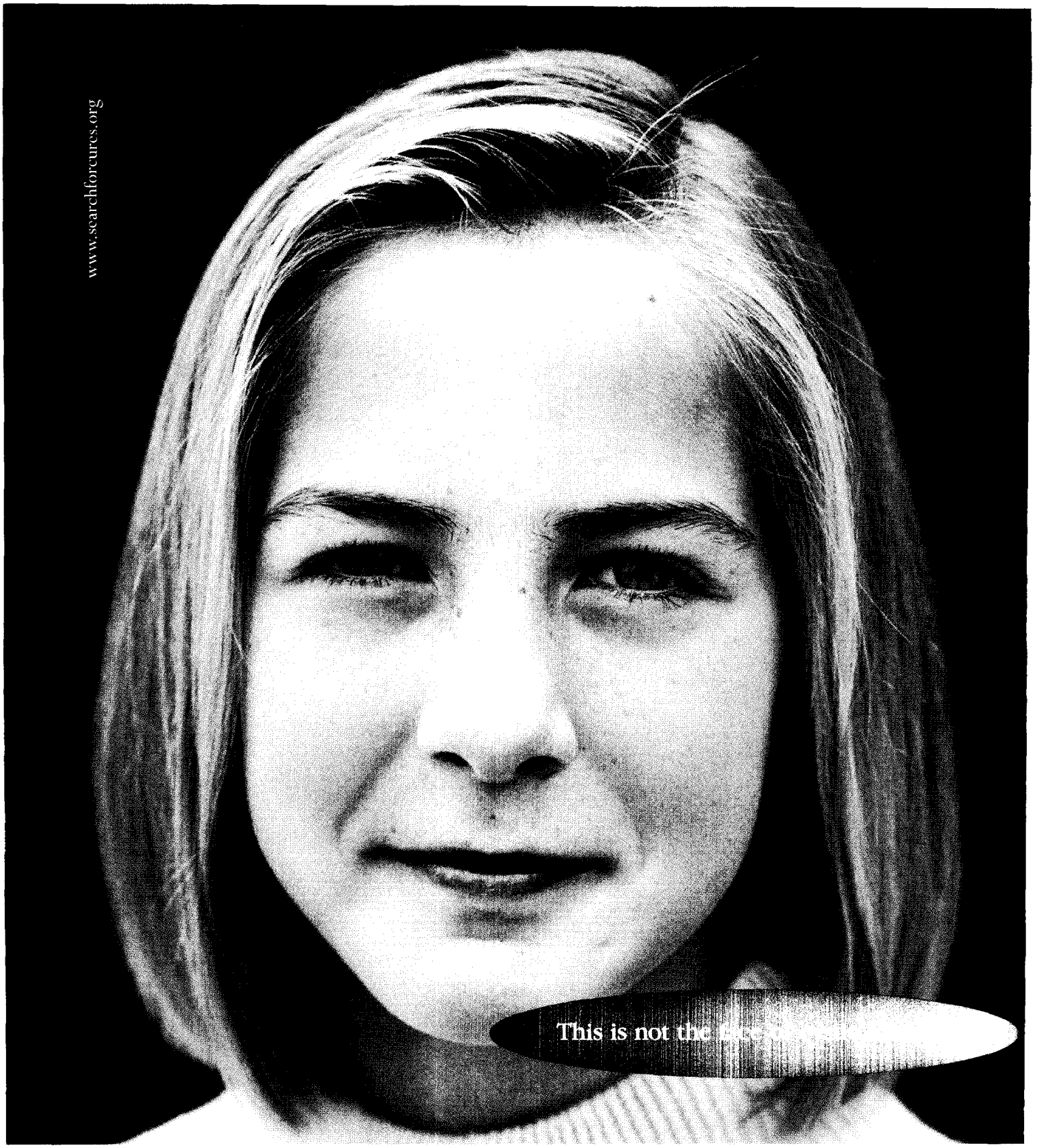

It's the face of Rachel Course, cartwheeler, violinist and an extraordinary kid. She has cystic fibrosis (CF), but it doesn't stop her from doing the things she wants to do. New medicines discovered by pharmaceutical company researchers have helped Rachel, and thousands of other CF patients, go from a life of little hope to one filled with dreams for the future. There isn't a cure for CF yet, but America's pharmaceutical companies get closer every day. So a little girl like Rachel can keep on doing what she does best. Being a kid.

America's Pharmaceutical Companies

Leading the way in the search for cures

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